Nan in the City

Myra Sawyer Hamlin

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NAN IN THE CITY.

NAN PLAYS FOR THE BOYS.

NAN IN THE CITY;

OR,

Nan's Winter with the Girls.

A SEQUEL TO

NAN AT CAMP CHICOPEE.

BY

MYRA SAWYER HAMLIN.

ILLUSTRATED BY L. J. BRIDGMAN.

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NAN IN THE CITY.

CHAPTER I.

NAN AMONG NEW FRIENDS.

"LA! la! Look out there, you girl with the clubs! I'm coming!"

Apart from the groups of girls who in the short loose dress of the "gym" waited the arrival of a new teacher in Physical Culture, a solitary young athlete performed with marvellous skill a rapid series of movements with Indian clubs. Above, perched as the "cherub that sits aloft," a tiny squirrel-like girl hung from a trapeze some fifteen feet in the air, and fearlessly charged through space towards the uplifted clubs, crying her warn-

ing almost too late to avert what looked like disaster to both.

"La! la! Look out there, you girl with the clubs! I'm coming!"

The girl with the clubs, thus unceremoniously addressed, moved quickly to one side, almost without breaking the regularity of her exercise. The little brown maiden swung by, and sprang quickly for an opposite rope with the agility of a circus performer. She looked scarcely more than twelve years old, though really sixteen, with her round head covered by short brown curls, and her short dress displaying two thin little legs that had long ago given her the nickname of "Spider." Swinging from her rope, she resembled the little squirrel-monkey called the lemur, and her face was full of brightness and merriment.

"You got out of the way just in time, Miss Nancy," she called, nothing daunted by the indifference of the girl who still

THE LITTLE BROWN MAIDEN SWUNG BY.

swung her clubs, but who suddenly, on hearing herself called "Miss Nancy," flushed half angrily, then, holding her clubs suspended, said, —

"Why do you call me Miss Nancy? My name is Anna; at home they call me Nan."

"I 'm glad it is n't Nancy. It does n't suit you to be Miss Nancy. I 'll call you Nan. I like you. You sit in my division. You don't get acquainted very easily, — a week is a long time to keep so stand off. My name is Julia Brinkerhoff, but then nobody ever calls me Julia. Jill is what they call me generally; sometimes Gypsy, sometimes 'Spider,' and once in a while other names not nearly so polite. You may call me Jill. I wish you would do those movements again. We never had any one in the girls' 'gym' who could swing clubs like that."

Glad to resume her occupation, and apparently no novice in it, the new girl began

again, counting half audibly, until there suddenly came across her line of vision, and close within the arc of her movements, a figure unlike any other in the room, clothed in a perfectly white uniform.

A murmur ran through the ranks of girls, signifying surprise and admiration, while in whispers spread the news, —

"It is the new teacher!"

"'Divinely tall and most divinely fair,'" said Gertrude Sands, a sentimental girl, who at once dedicated her next week's allowance to a bouquet for this lovely being.

The "lovely being," however, placed herself in no attitude for homage, but, coming into the centre of the hall, produced from the recesses of a pocket artistically concealed in her gymnasium skirt a tape measure, which she drew through her fingers with the professional air of an artistic dressmaker, as with a low laugh she said, —

"I suppose I must call myself your new

teacher, though I see one young person who can teach me something about club swinging. The first thing for me to do is to take your measures, not for new uniforms, though yours might be improved, but for new bodies. I can see that some of you need certain exercises which others do not. I shall write your measures in my book, and by and by we will take them again, and see how much we have gained by our work together. My young friend, the club swinger, — may I ask your name? — I can almost believe you have ideal measurements. Where did you learn to swing clubs?"

The young girl thus called into prominence was tall and lithe, with broad strong shoulders and free carriage. Her bright hair, in which the childish golden had begun to deepen to tones of varying brown, fell in two heavy braids below her waist, and was brushed back from a forehead which but for stray locks loosened by her exercise might

have been severely broad and high. Her eyes were of that deep dark blueness which so readily become black with emotion. She seemed utterly unconscious of the whispered comments of the girls, whose envy had been aroused by the attention she had obtained from the new teacher. She submitted to the measurements of waist and shoulders with only a heightened color, answering the questions the new teacher had asked simply like a child of ten, yet in a straightforward manner more like a boy than a girl.

"My name is Ratcliffe, Nan Ratcliffe. My cousin Hal and the boys taught me to swing clubs. What are we to call you?"

"Sure enough, you don't know my name. It is Margaret Eliot;" with a soft little laugh that started a ripple which eddied away to the farthest group of girls. Then drawing her figure up with a sort of conscious dignity, as if she must really begin to be the teacher, she said, —

"I shall have to ask six of you over there to go into the dressing-room and take off your uniforms. I cannot tell much about your figures in those blouses. I will come in and make my physical examinations; after that six others, and so on as fast as we can."

Miss Eliot followed the girls who were designated, leaving the others to extol her graces after the manner of school girls everywhere. "Is n't she perfectly lovely? What glorious eyes! What a sweet voice! What a splendid figure!"

"Nan Ratcliffe, I should think you must feel awfully set up to be singled out at once as her favorite."

"I don't think Miss Eliot meant to show any partiality, — I happened to be the only girl exercising."

"Oh, you can afford to be modest. I would give anything to have her praise me like that," said Gertrude Sands.

"I wish I could do some of my class work

as well as gymnastics. You, girls, have the advantage of me in so many other ways," said Nan, modestly.

"Oh, you 'll come out all right," said the little brown maid, whose trapeze exercise had entirely escaped Miss Eliot's notice, but who now stood beside Nan Ratcliffe, regarding her with an enthusiastic admiration which had something of condescension in it. "You 'll come out all right, if you are a country girl. You are first-rate."

Nan could hardly fail to like this little brown girl who had enrolled herself as her friend, and the two passed on together to submit to the physical examination as the others came out of the dressing-room.

"We are going to have our backbones straightened, the girls say," said Julia. "I 'm all right; there is nothing the matter with my spine," as she wriggled herself out of her uniform and stood as straight and as sharp as a needle in silk tights, while Miss

Eliot pinched her and punched her from neck to thigh and from thigh to ankles.

"You are pretty nearly all right — Miss Midget — What is your name?"

"Julia Brinkerhoff," demurely.

"Miss Julia. But you have a habit of standing on one foot that will spoil your little figure."

"How could you tell that?" asked Jill, her black eyes snapping like those of a surprised monkey.

"Oh, one of your thighs and one of your shoulders tell that."

"Well, what is the matter with Nan Ratcliffe?"

Nan, who had vanished into her own little dressing-corner, waited the new physical examination with more curiosity than amusement, and while the teacher laid her soft hands on her firm flesh, felt a pleasurable sensation in the knowledge that she had no deformities to be brought to light.

"Vertebræ normal — thighs even — shoulders — shoulders — my dear — do you play the violin?"

"A little," said Nan, falteringly, but with almost as much belief in the magic of Miss Eliot's art as had Julia.

"That's it; left shoulder just a little off the line, brought about by holding your violin not quite right. We will straighten that. It does not amount to anything. But perfection can't afford a flaw. I will give you some home exercises. You really have ideal measurements, a splendid physique."

Going rapidly from one to the other, the new teacher had soon made a category of the physiques of the girls which was a surprise to themselves, not always agreeable, and many of them felt that "the power to see ourselves as ithers see us" is not a gift to be lightly asked of the gods.

Miss Eliot was, however, there to hold the mirror up to nature; yet she softened the

disagreeable truths by telling some pleasant ones, and saying, —

"It is as much our duty to make the most of our bodies as our brains, and we can all learn to cultivate our good points and correct our bad ones. I shall not only give you the exercises that will do you all good together, but each of you a set of rules to follow at home."

Never was feminine form more perfect than that of the white-robed apostle of Swedish teaching who then proceeded to weave a mystic spell around the young hearts of the Junior class, by the intricate and systematic mysteries of her cult.

Then the great gong sounded the hour's end, and with a brief "Good afternoon" the vision of loveliness vanished and twenty girls made a frantic rush to lockers and dressing-rooms. It was the last hour of the session, and the girls were going home. The "new girl" lingered, partly because, being a "new

girl," she had not rushed with the others for precedence in the dressing-rooms, and so was left with the very last to find a corner for her dressing.

Her brain was still whirling with the mazy rhythm of Miss Eliot's exercises, as she swung her book strap to the last echoing measures of the pianist's music, when the low sweet voice was again at her side.

"Shall we walk on together, Miss Ratcliffe?" — just then the simplest words that anybody would say, but yet the music of the spheres could not have been more heavenly to the school girl in the first ecstasy of loving a new teacher. It was as though Miss Eliot had said, "The moon is made of green cheese; let's take a bite, my dear," and it had sounded in her heart as "We 'll sup with the gods to-night on nectar and ambrosia."

"Walk with me, walk with me, on, on, on forever," said Nan's heart. "I thought I should ride," said Nan's tongue, stupidly

and perversely, as she turned as red as a peony.

"Oh, I am so sorry," said Miss Eliot, "I wanted to get acquainted with you; we are both strangers at school, you know."

"Acquainted with me? What an angel!" sang Nan's heart; and her tongue: "I think I will walk, after all. I usually do, and it is not very late."

"Where do you live?" asked the divinity, using commonplace language for her heavenly messages.

"In Elm Avenue," said Nan, briefly, fearing lest "Her" way should lead elsewhere.

"That 's just my way," said the low voice.

"The way to the stars," said Nan's heart; but her tongue said nothing, and her feet seemed to stumble over each other in perverse clumsiness.

"You said that you learned to swing clubs from watching the boys; I suppose you have brothers?" said Miss Eliot, looking down in

a friendly way from the majesty of her splendid height and smiling with those gracious brown eyes.

"Brothers, boys — boys, brothers," echoed Nan's ears; "I suppose I must answer." "Oh, not brothers; our boys taught me, our camp boys! I live in New Hampshire; my father has a summer camp for boys. I don't know anything about girls in general; I don't like them much. The boys are my friends. With them I row, play ball and tennis; that is how I happen to be so strong."

Was she talking or only trying to talk? Surely Miss Eliot looked as though she were listening to somebody, and perhaps she was talking after all.

"Go on, my dear. Tell me something more about it. I knew you were n't a city girl."

"Of course, I am so awkward," said Nan, bluntly.

"Oh, no, I did not mean that," said Miss

Eliot, laughing and laying one hand on Nan's arm. "You are so free in your motions, so frank in your eyes, — quite like a little girl whom Dame Nature has chosen for a favorite, and Madam Grundy cannot spoil. Tell me some more, my dear."

And Nan, glad to speak of her dear Camp Chicopee, plunged rapidly on. "Oh, we do have such jolly times at the lake. It was so hard to leave it. But of course the boys go away in the fall, but the lake is there and our own boat. Once in a while I would give all Brooklyn for an hour with my boat. But they are all so good to me here. I stay with Mrs. Prince — Mrs. Reginald Prince," said Nan slowly, with a little consciousness of the city worth of Mrs. Prince's first name, which had its reward in a smile of recognition from Miss Eliot, who said, —

"Mrs. Reginald Prince. Oh, yes — of course I know who she is. Are you her niece?"

"Oh, no, the boys belong to our camp and they have no sister, so Mrs. Prince has been very kind to me, because — because — I am a sort of adopted sister to the boys. Lewis and Mrs. Prince would have liked me to go to a fashionable school, but there were so many considerations. I can't afford to be just ornamental. I have got to take care of myself by and by, and the course at Pratt is just what I need."

"And you chose to go to Pratt very wisely, my dear, though it must have taken considerable strength of mind to do so if Mrs. Prince preferred the fashionable school."

"Oh, she did n't influence me, — Mrs. Prince is so large-minded, — papa calls her the 'best rounded' woman he knows. Some clever people are so frumpish, you know, and some well-bred people so stupid; but she is clever and well bred and philanthropic and everything. I am sorry I could n't make up my mind to go to the

Packer, for I did like some of the girls Mrs. Prince asked to luncheon — and some of the girls at our school are rather queer. But I don't know any of them well, and perhaps I seem just as queer to them."

"You and I must be friends, and learn together to find the good points of the girls, who probably have not all had the advantages of your home surroundings and have few of them anything but self-support to look forward to. It is a great boon to Brooklyn that the Pratt will really fit girls to be workers, and skilled, thoroughly educated workers, not half-taught bunglers. You must come to see me in the little flat where I live with a friend, another teacher. We like to see any of our girls on Thursday afternoons, and will give you a cup of chocolate."

"Oh, thank you so much. Here we are at Mrs. Prince's."

They had passed from street to street

lined with narrow brick houses set in close blocks but shaded with pleasant trees, just beginning to lose their foliage, until they reached a broad avenue bordered on each side with beautiful houses set in well-kept lawns, resembling the streets of the smaller New England capitals much more than those of the Long Island suburbs of the metropolis of the United States.

"This street is like an oasis in a desert," said Miss Eliot, as they paused to say good-by.

"Oh, yes, I believe I should die of home-sickness if Mrs. Prince's house did not have windows on all sides."

"You are indeed favored, my dear. Come some Thursday;" and shaking hands in cordial fashion, Miss Eliot passed on, the swing of her skirt and the carriage of her arms telling the pleasant tale of physical culture.

"And when she had passed, it seemed like

the ceasing of exquisite music," said Nan, being at that age when the language of poets seems fitly to express the language of the heart.

That night when the lamp was lighted on the library table and Nan and Lewis sat silently conning their lessons, "Margaret Eliot, Madge, Maggie, Mag," sang itself into the lines of Nan's geometrical problem, through the sense of physiology, into the very letter of her English literature. "She is quite different from any of the others, and she really did single me out. I am so glad Cousin Hal taught me those new movements with the clubs. Margaret Eliot. And Mrs. Prince says she will ask her to dinner."

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH SOME THREADS ARE TIED.

IT had taken Nan much longer to become accustomed to the changed conditions of her life than it would seem from the brief sketch of them given to her new teacher.

It was already six weeks since she left her New Hampshire hills, and for three weeks she had been like a bird imprisoned in a golden cage, and Mrs. Prince had almost despaired of her power to wean her from her country life. The boys hardly knew their playmate of Camp Chicopee, in the quiet pale girl who had been transplanted. All efforts to arouse an interest in city sights and attractions were unavailing for a time. Even

the beauty of Mrs. Prince's home, one of those rare city houses built back from the street line and surrounded by plots of grass and trees on all sides, and the many evidences of luxury grated upon the girl at first, and seemed only to increase her distance from the simple New England home. But wise Mrs. Prince was patient and waited, and one day she told her how they treated the homesick girls in foreign schools, where homesickness is recognized as a malady as real as any other, and just as curable by time and the right medicine.

"Why, my dear, when I was your age at school in Germany, I saw more than one poor girl put to bed and dosed with tea, sometimes herb tea, for a severe attack of what the Germans call *Heimweh*, for the Germans are a very sentimental race, and the emotions have to be recognized. Then, after the homesick girl was put to bed for a day or two, and visited and coddled, one or two

girls were sent to her room to get acquainted and make friends, and soon the *Heimweh* disappeared and the girl took her place in the class, where her presence had not been required during this attack of acute homesickness."

Mrs. Prince had told this little story entirely without attempt at applying it to Nan's particular case, and she did not try to adorn it with a moral by saying: "You, dear child, are not in a boarding-school with strangers and without many comforts, but you are in a lovely home, with friends ready to minister to your every desire, and before you an opportunity to do what you like." Wise Mrs. Prince knew better than that, and she knew that after the strangeness had worn away, Nan's own good sense would come to her rescue; but she also recalled the love of the Swiss for his mountains, as the fiercest form of homesickness, something harder to overcome a hundred times than

any homesickness known to the German school girl.

Lewis's programme of distraction was of little avail, and to Nan the increasing roar and turmoil of the great New York streets was too great a contrast to the silent grandeur of her beloved hills to be enjoyed, and even the wonders of Central Park and Macy's were a torment to her vexed little heart. Lewis was naturally a city boy. His summers at the lake had been a pleasure for him, but he loved the crowds of the city streets, the city sights and sounds. His sketch book was filled with the types of city life. He loved to make caricatures of the groups on the street corners in Lower Broadway or of the girls on Fifth Avenue.

When Nan said, "I would give all Broadway for one of our hills," Lewis said: "Oh, Nan, wait till you learn to love it. Why, you can't understand how I love it. Sometimes I think if I should die, I would like to

be buried in front of Trinity Church, where the crowds from Wall Street would walk over my head every day."

"Oh, Lewis," Nan protested, "how can you? I 'm sure I should want to be in better company, or at least in peace, at the foot of a hill in the farthest country nook."

"I did not think you were such a born country girl, Nan," said Lewis, with more real temper than he often showed to Nan.

"I told you so, Lewis; you were bound to be disappointed in me. I never shall like the city, though I will get used to it, and am going to study hard and make the most of it, and I don't mean to be ungrateful to your dear mamma, not a bit."

"But I mean you shall like it, Nan," Lewis said, "if I fight it out on this line all winter, as Grant said. You may hate New York as much as you please, but you 've got to like Brooklyn. Why, it 's your native heath. You were born here."

"Yes, I know that," said Nan, "and that is the most melancholy part of it. I 'm a kind of traitor, after all. Well, I 'll try to get over this hateful feeling. I 'll tell you what, Lewis, — I believe I would like to go down to the beach. I remember ever so long ago, when we lived in Brooklyn, the sea rolling out ever so far to meet the sky. I think I would like to see it again."

"Of course, why did n't we think of that?" said Lewis; and that very day Mrs. Prince went with them to that level coast plain of Long Island against which the great Atlantic beats its measureless tide year after year with infinite grandeur. The summer visitors had all gone, and only a few autumn lovers of the waves straggled up and down upon the beach. The little boys who had spent many hours on that playground were soon busy at making forts in the sand, and Nan was happy, happier than in many weeks, as the waves dashed louder up against

the breakwater and came closer to their feet, then out again to rock some incoming ship.

Lewis took out his pencil and sketched a bit of sea and sky line where two great ocean steamers sent back faint smoke spiral good-byes to the continent they were leaving, and Nan feasted eyes and heart on the vast beauty of it all, and then went back to her new home happier and wiser, with an appetite for a late dinner and a zeal for the next day.

It was after this that she began to show some real interest in the life about her, and then Mrs. Prince saw that the question of a school was not one which Nan would have decided for her without some chance of choice. It was like Mrs. Prince to put aside all her own engagements for the next few weeks, and to invite young girls of her acquaintance to dine, — young girls from different schools in the city, who might help Nan to make this choice; and it was like Lewis to say, —

"Oh, mamma, why such a dose of girls? Must Nan have them as antidotes to the boys? We have had Packer girls, and Adelphi girls, and private school girls, and public school girls, and pretty girls, and plain girls, and I don't believe Nan likes one better than she does another, and I don't believe she cares a fig where she goes to school."

"Now, that is just where you are mistaken, Master Lewis," said Nan, a little indignantly, for she liked to have a mind of her own above all. "I like all of these girls well enough, but I don't think I could ever be one of them. They are so ornamental — and they don't seem to mean anything. Is n't there a school in that Institute where we go to get library books?"

"Why, yes, to be sure, there 's the Pratt, mamma," said Lewis; "but we don't know any girls do we, mamma, who go there? There are n't any girls in our set."

"Why, Lewis, I 'm ashamed of you. Are you going to be one of the men Byron speaks of when he says, —

'He thinks his little set mankind'?

Of course there is the Pratt. I know a number of young ladies who are taking special courses there. Why, Hattie Duryea is studying architecture there, and Mary Armstrong cooking, and Lizzie Walters kindergarten, and Bessie Page dressmaking, and Constance Dalton designing. But they are special students. You want a regular school course, Nan. We will go over and see about the Technical High School course. I had not thought of that, because they do so little with languages and literature, — no Latin, very little German, a great deal of science," said Mrs. Prince.

"That 's just what I want. I don't care to learn just to talk about things, I want to be able to do things. Can't we go this very day, Mrs. Prince, and see about it?"

And so, as it happened that the school of the useful arts was but a short distance from Mrs. Prince's, as soon as breakfast was over they were on their way, loaded with books to be changed at the library; and when Nan had been carried to the top of the large building, which is inside and out of brick, and had seen what the brain of a single man and the money of a millionaire had devised for the education of girls and boys and men and women, she had more respect for brick walls and rich men than she ever had before. And when she had seen the great gymnasium, and the assembly hall, and the hundred work-rooms for every kind of industry, from making starch to making houses, and from chemical laboratories to art studios, she began to be very grateful for the privilege of being in Brooklyn. Then when she found that there were class-rooms and teachers and girls and boys, her courage began to fail a little; and

when the examination papers were given her, and a very kind teacher gave her a desk and pencil and paper, it took all her courage to fill them out to the best of her ability. And what rejoicing there was when one eventful morning an official envelope came by post, containing the announcement that she had passed her examinations so well that she could enter the second class instead of the freshman; and when Lewis saw her papers with their high rank in algebra and arithmetic, geography and American history, he said, with a superior air, taking up his Virgil, "I could never have answered half of them, but then you have n't had a bit of Latin or Greek."

"And I don't want any," said Nan, going off to read that precious paper, and to con the prospectus for her school year, which was to give her geometry, chemistry, botany, cooking, millinery, drawing, besides many other commonplace studies.

She had spent more than a week at the model school when Miss Eliot came and seemed to bring a new element into Nan's steady-going life. Jill, too, had decided to do her best to break down the reserve of the girl from New Hampshire; so that, as the days of the term lengthened into weeks, Nan found that her new life was to be made up of much that was not study, and that sometimes we can learn outside of books more than we can in them.

At home there was always Lewis for comradeship, and the little boys to be petted and told stories, and by almost daily post letters from one and another of the camp boys at school or college.

Cousin Harold and Steve Whittemore were hardly three miles away, working with that brave colony of young men, called the "University Settlement," who are trying to help the poor people of the East Side in New York; for Hal, though he had begun the prac-

tice of law, had not too much to do as yet, and his leisure was spent in gathering the street boys into clubs for work and recreation, teaching them out of his experience at Camp Chicopee lessons of truth and honor, self-respect and courage; and Steve Whittemore, though in the Divinity School, had thrown in his lot with Harold, and the two young men had furnished for themselves a tiny flat in the top of a tenement house. As frequently as they could spare the time, both came to Mrs. Prince's. And Marshall, at Princeton, had still the habit of five years of writing a weekly letter to Nan, his little playmate of six summers, and if these letters were very full of football just now, Nan enjoyed them the more.

Her awe of Miss Eliot soon passed away, and she realized that her teacher was, after all, a girl not many years older than herself, with a girl's hopes and dreams, but following a chosen career from an exalted love of art

and action. A college girl, Miss Eliot too had joined some of her friends in the fellowship work in the College Settlement, although of this Nan was yet to know more. She seemed still to her the most beautiful creature she had ever seen, with her lovely chestnut hair and wonderful brown eyes, in which Nan could often see that stray golden gleam that lights the eyes of the Gordon setter.

Jill, with her audacious familiarity, soon knocked down all barriers between herself and Nan, and although, like Lewis, from the tip of her saucy tongue to the end of her dancing toes a product of city life, she forced Nan to enjoy her society and to give her her confidence.

If it had not been for Jill, Nan would never have responded to Miss Eliot's invitation to her "Thursday afternoon;" but Jill, by a method of her own, had discovered that Nan wished but dared not make a formal call.

"Never did such a thing in my life; should n't know how to behave," said Nan, somewhat bluntly.

"Don't suppose you ever did up in Chicopee. Not much conversation in trees, that I ever heard of," said Miss Jill. "But here, my dear Nan, you are in a city, where people do make calls, and it 's time for you to learn how."

"But school girls don't make calls," said Nan.

"I suppose they must, or Miss Eliot would not take the trouble to make chocolate every Thursday and ask us to come. I am going next Thursday, and you may go if you want to." Jill was busy with her book-strap, and did not look up as she snapped these words and her buckle at the same time.

Nan ignored the question, but replied with another, "What time will you go?"

"About half-past four. I 'll be on the

corner of Fulton and J Streets. If you are not there, I suppose I shall have to go alone?"

Nan did not say whether she would be there or not, but Jill knew that she would, and Nan had waited five minutes impatiently before Jill appeared on the appointed day. There was a look of mischievous merriment in Jill's face when she came in sight, and she said, —

"Oh, you thought you would come?"

The girls were as great a contrast in appearance as in disposition, — Nan with her clear-eyed, steady, honest face, large strong frame, and fine carriage, reflective and courageous; Jill with her roguish, coquettish features, her spry and tiny graceful figure, alert and wary, alive at every point.

"Do you know where the Escurial is, Jill?" asked Nan, in the hopeless way of one who despairs of ever finding a new street in a great city.

"Of course I do," said Jill, with the confidence of the girl who has never let anything escape her observation since she began to notice her own toes, at the tender age of four weeks.

"Can we walk there?" asked Nan.

"Well, yes, unless you are lame and halt and blind, since it is only four blocks from this spot. Now, Nan, you just notice how easy it is; follow your nose, and you will be at the Escurial in about five minutes."

"Have n't we heard that the Escurial was built in the form of a gridiron in honor of St. Lawrence? If so, flat-iron would be more appropriate for a flat house, don't you think so?" said Jill, as they were mounting to the top floor of the apartment house in the elevator.

Of course both girls laughed, and having once begun to laugh they kept on laughing, standing before the door after they had left the elevator, waiting until they could stop

laughing enough to ring the bell, and in agony of mind lest somebody should come out and find them laughing. Nan was the first to compose herself, and with very rigid muscles pressed the electric button which was the "open sesame" of their hopes.

Jill, stuffing her pocket-handkerchief into her mouth, stifled back the final giggle, and when the maid appeared she was as presentable as Nan. It was a relief to both girls when the maid seemed to understand the ways of school girls, and did not ask for their cards, but ushered them at once into the little drawing-room, where they found Miss Eliot and a lovely lady with silvery hair, whom she called "Aunt Ellen" and who had been a teacher many years, two girls from the Pratt, and, way off in a corner, apparently attending to the steaming tea-kettle, a young man.

"Why, Cousin Hal!" said Nan.

"Why, Nan!" said Cousin Hal.

"Why, Mr. Ratcliffe, is Nan your cousin?" said Miss Eliot.

And then followed explanations, that Cousin Harold, having gotten into difficulties about a poor boy who had come to the Settlement for aid, and having found that the boy was a Brooklyn boy and that Miss Eliot had been kind to him, had come to her. For he knew Miss Eliot, because they had met in strange places on the East Side, where babies were sick and fathers were drunk and mothers were hungry, and Hal had seen Miss Eliot take babies, and mothers too, right off to the college house to be fed and clothed, and he had n't any idea that she had anything else to do but that, or that she had any classes in anything; and that in a big city she should know Nan was the last thing he should have thought of. Miss Eliot, knowing him as one of the good fellows who lived down there in the slums because they wish to and not because they have to,

knew him and his friend, whom the poor called "Saint Stephen," only as workers with them, seeing them in and out of all sorts of unhappy homes, had never for a moment thought of their knowing Nan.

And Nan, looking at Cousin Hal, whose beard of last summer's growth had been shaven, and whose dress was not of camp nor of slums but of city fashion, could not help wondering if Miss Eliot did not think him rather nice looking; and when she looked at Miss Eliot in her pretty yellow afternoon dress, with its sheen of ribbons and fluff of lace, Nan hardly questioned that Cousin Harold must find her very fair to look at. But both were too much absorbed in the history of Dicky Flynn to show any signs of personal interest in each other. Cousin Harold said, —

"The boy is only thirteen years old, and yet he is supporting a mother and a baby sister besides himself. He has sold papers,

candy, blacked boots, and everything you can think of, and he has a marvellous eye to the main chance. But he has n't any conscience. He makes his boast of the number of Sunday-schools he has 'worked' for clothes for the baby and himself. His mother wants to get some stock for a little store, and I have heard of a good little place, if there was any woman to investigate the case."

"Of course I will with pleasure," said Miss Eliot. "Dicky is an old friend of Aunt Ellen's. She was instrumental in getting him into her Sunday-school several years ago, when her object was to save his morals from corruption. Unfortunately, Dicky thought a great deal more about the Christmas tree mittens and other perquisites than he did about telling the truth; and when she found that he had gotten several pairs of mittens from different mission schools and sold them at a profit to newsboys, she began

to lose faith in him. However, she hears from him and his mother periodically, when they are about to be turned out of doors or Dicky wants to change his business."

"Yes, Mr. Ratcliffe, Dicky belongs distinctly to this side of the Bridge rather than the other. I don't see how he happened to drift to the Settlement," said Aunt Ellen.

"He investigates; he is a real little Yankee, and interests me," said Harold. Then turning to Nan, who had listened with wonder to this tale of the boy without a conscience, he said, —

"You 've come to a queer world, little coz, and perhaps you 'd like to visit our corner of it by and by." Then, shaking hands with Miss Eliot, he patted Nan's shoulder in a cousinly fashion and was gone, leaving the girls to chocolate and chatter.

CHAPTER III.

NAN VISITS THE COLLEGE SETTLEMENT.

"HAVE you had the measles, Nan?" Mrs. Prince sat in a low chair in her own room, working upon a piece of embroidery, when Nan, going through the hall on her return from school one Friday afternoon, was arrested by this somewhat startling question from that lady.

"Why, certainly, Mrs. Prince, ever so long ago," Nan answered, entering the room anxiously, with the thought of Wolcott uppermost in her mind.

"And the whooping-cough?" asked Mrs. Prince.

"Yes, indeed," with a smile.

"And scarlet fever?" Mrs. Prince pur-

sued, looking at Nan, whose anxiety had altered to perplexity.

"I don't think so; but do I look ill?" asked Nan, stepping to the mirror to have all fears on that score set aside by the vision of ruddy cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"You look ill? My dear, not in the least; but your cousin Harold has written to ask us, you and Lewis and myself, to his Boys' Club Saturday night in the Settlement. It is not in a savory locality, you know, and there is always some danger of infectious diseases. However, if you have had the ordinary children's diseases, I think your good condition a safeguard against much. Would you enjoy going?"

"Of course. I think it would be so interesting. May we go? But why do you look so funny? Is there any other stumbling-block?"

"Well, Hal asks two favors, — one that you will bring your violin, the other that Lewis will do some charcoal drawing for them."

"Oh, oh!" said Nan, for a moment taken back by the suggestion. "I could not play in public; I don't play well enough for that."

"It is hardly playing in public, dear; it is giving your mite. You know Harold and his friends are trying so hard to gain influence over those boys who are so tempted to spend their nights on the street. He and Steve have worked very hard this fall to keep the little boys and older ones in the Club, by amusing and teaching them. Harold says it would be of great help to them both, and to the boys themselves, if you and Lewis would lend your talent, small as it is, to them for one evening. You are both so young, little above many of the boys in age, that it would have a great effect with them."

"I had not thought of it in that way at all. Of course, if I can help the boys I will gladly play, if I can play well enough."

"Certainly, my dear, some of your sim-

plest selections without your notes will be best."

"But will Lewis do it?" asked Nan.

"I do not know; but here he comes," as a boyish step sprang up the stair, and Lewis bounded into his mother's room with a merry greeting, —

"All well to-day, little mother; monthly report ninety-seven, and the Poly boys going to play Stevens next Saturday." Kissing his mother lightly on the cheek, the happy boy looked from one to the other quizzically: "What are you and Nan plotting now?"

They then laid Harold's plan before Lewis, and it met his hearty approval.

"Just the thing! Of course I 'll go. To-morrow is it? Well, that is better than later. Too much football next month."

"Football? Oh, Lewis," said Mrs. Prince, "how I dread the football season!"

"Never mind, mother dear, don't worry! I won't get hurt, — I 'm only a full-back,"

said Lewis, with his usual confidence in his good luck. "Come, Nan, it's just half-past three; supposing we take a spin out to the park."

"All right! Just wait five minutes till I get my bicycle suit," said Nan.

Later in the afternoon, when they had returned, and found Mrs. Prince with the little boys in the library, Lewis said, —

"How are we going to get to that hole of a place to-morrow night?"

"We should take the cars in the daytime, but I think to-morrow evening we will drive over the Bridge and up the East Side to within a short distance of the Settlement, where the streets are too crowded to be pleasant to drive through. Then I shall depend upon my son Lewis and Giovanni to protect us."

"Giovanni? Why, the Italian, mamma?"

"Well, you see, he is not too respectable-looking for the locality. He talks Italian,

which will be of much use in the neighborhood; and then he is as strong as a lion and devoted to us. He will ride on the box with James."

"As strong as a lion. I should say so. I wish you could have seen him, mamma, this afternoon just before the ashman came around for the barrels," said Harry, jumping to his feet from the prostrate position on the rug at his mother's feet. "You know cook said that a little boy came last week and told her Giovanni sent him to put out the ash-barrels, and she let him put them out and gave him ten cents and some breakfast. Well, to-night that boy came again, and I told Van that was the boy. My eye! how Giovanni went for him! He took him so, and shook him just like a cat would a mouse," said Harry, taking Wolcott by the collar by way of emphasis, till Wolcott screamed, "Now quit that! I did not take the ash-barrels."

"Oh, did I hurt? Well, I guess that's

nothing to the way Giovanni shook that boy, jabbering at him in his jibberish, 'Go 'long out dis block! Ye stole my barr'ls. Dis my block. You 's cheap folks. My barr'ls rich folks; you go 'long to cheap blocks.' I came up to Van and I said, 'You let go of that boy or I 'll tell my mother; he is a poor boy just like you, and maybe he is hungry.' But the boy was so frightened he ran as fast as he could; but if I see him again I will give him some pennies."

"But he did tell a lie, for Giovanni did n't send him to take out our barrels," said Wolcott.

"I suppose he did; but it makes him tell lies, to be so hungry. He had a hungry look," said Harry.

"The next time he comes, Harry, you let me know and we will find out about him," said his mother, patting the little fellow's hand.

"If he were n't so devoted to us, Giovanni

would be just insufferable, but he has many good points. How hungry he looked, too, when he first began to take care of our furnace! Now I believe he really thinks he has the monopoly of the block, and that if it were n't for him the ashes of the 'quality' would fall into the hands of some low-lived Irishman. He is, however, as honest and thrifty as he is bad-tempered and unintelligible. To think that he knows so little English after two years in this country! I believe if he could be persuaded to go to the night school over in the Settlement, it would work a great change in him. I will suggest it to Harold or Steve."

Lewis said, "Oh, he always says, 'Me too old learn read — seventeen, nineteen years old.'"

Saturday night came quickly enough after a good long holiday of out-of-door sport and exercise, — tennis at the school court for Nan,

and football for Lewis, with all sorts of rough-and-tumble frolic for the little boys. Thanks to the bracing autumn air and their splendid health and youth, they felt no fatigue when after the six-o'clock dinner the carriage came to the door, and all were "booted and saddled and ready for the fight," as Lewis said, coming down the steps brandishing a masculine-looking implement in the shape of a cane, which however proved to be only the case for a huge roll of drawing-paper, while in his other hand he carried a box of charcoal and drawing materials. Nan with her violin strung over her shoulders followed, and both were joined by Mrs. Prince, to whom the little boys clung, saying, "Good-night."

But at the foot of the steps stood Giovanni, smiling as only he could, and dressed as only he would, from top to toe in the most redoubtable suit that ever fell from the hands of an auctioneer or graced the windows of

a pawnbroker's shop. Even Mrs. Prince, strong in her perfect self-command and well-bred composure, felt an irresistible impulse to laugh, and Lewis gave a low whistle, while Nan could not repress that anomalous sound, — a school-girl giggle. The Italian boy familiar to them all in the suitable and humble garments of his calling now appeared in a full evening suit of shiny black broadcloth. A low-cut white vest displayed a broad expanse of white shirt-bosom, ornamented with red glass studs, and adorned with a flaming red necktie. In the lapel of his swallow-tail coat he wore a red sugar rose, the relic of Wolcott's last birthday cake.[1] In his ears small gold hoops dangled, and on his little finger a seal ring of royal dimensions, and a huge watch-chain heavy with charms completed this amazing costume.

Conscious that he was "a thing of beauty and a joy forever," the Italian boy stood

[1] A true description.

silent, smiling a smile peculiarly his own, — an invitation of approval and an expression of supreme satisfaction with himself. If the lad had been one of her own household servants, Mrs. Prince would not have hesitated to send him off at once to change his costume; but the Italian boy was a free man, as it were, a lad whose services were only intermittent, and Mrs. Prince felt that she had no right to dictate to him upon a subject so clearly affecting his personal vanity. At the same time it seemed not improbable that they might be subjected to some ridicule over on the East Side, with an attendant of such flamboyant appearance. She was however equal to the situation, and said: "Good evening, Giovanni. Take these things to the carriage, and stand by the horses a moment while James comes to me." Then re-entering the house quickly, she re-appeared with a long ulster, which she handed to the coachman, who although loath to

leave the horses with that "jibbering Italian," had come rapidly to the stoop.

"Take this ulster, James, and when Giovanni leaves the carriage, persuade him to put it over his evening suit. The poor fellow does not know that he is not suitably dressed, of course. Don't make fun of him, but tell him that it is a bad neighborhood, and that he might lose his watch-chain. See that he buttons up his coat."

"Yes, ma'am," said the well-trained James, with perfect immovability, but inwardly vowing to "dress that popinjay down." He knew the Italian boy's temper, however, too well to run the risk of disturbing the peace of Mrs. Prince's drive by altercation with him; and the means he used must have been pacific but efficacious, for when Giovanni jumped from the box at a familiar corner of the Bowery, the gorgeous attire was shrouded by a long melton ulster.

Here was life with a hundred strange

colors,—life of which Nan had never dreamed, though it was vaguely familiar to Lewis. How far away seemed that broad sky above her beloved lake, as she caught but a flash here and there between the high buildings! For here the sky indeed seemed still farther away, and she almost wondered if those people that crowded the sidewalks ever saw it at all. Never before had that beautiful home country seemed so distant; and yet, strangely enough, the homesickness that came into her heart made her pity these people who knew it not the more and to shrink from them less.

Mrs. Prince drew her hand through her own arm, and pressed it silently; then said,—

"It is n't very pleasant, my dear, but they are not nearly so unhappy as you would be, and things are much better, a hundred times better, than they used to be, better even than last year before Mulberry Bend went. Now there is a breathing-place behind these build-

ings. There were others still dirtier and more closely packed with human beings. You see there is almost an air of joyousness about some of these people; the women are out to market, because it is Saturday night, and their own or their husband's wages have been paid."

Such a motley crowd passed by them; women screeching like peacocks or chattering like magpies in the language of Italy or Spain, Russia or Poland, swarming around carts of merchandise drawn up in the gutters, — handcarts piled with cabbages none too fresh, exhaling the odors of sauerkraut; push-carts with emaciated carcasses of last year's fowl too tough to be sold elsewhere; carts of onions, potatoes, wood, coal, fish, and fruit, — carts full of every kind of ware which could be sold for small money in small quantities.

These handcarts were lighted, some by a small pine torch, others by oil lamps of tin

which dripped unnoticed on whatever viand was near; and each vender screamed his wares as loud as he could, sometimes in one language, sometimes in another, but seldom in English. The buyers were all women, bareheaded or with heads covered by gay kerchiefs of purple, yellow, and green.

It was to Mrs. Prince a malodorous reminiscence of a fair in some foreign city, but to the children it appeared only novel and repulsive. They crept closer to Mrs. Prince, and Giovanni walked now in front and now behind, watching and warding every possible danger, his eye on alleys and doorways, curbstones and gutters, like a dog who knows the covers of his game. It was a mystery to Giovanni, — this Saturday night excursion to regions too unclean for such women as Mrs. Prince; but he shared with all her protégés an implicit faith in her sense of right, and went on as faithfully as a hound. He did not like it himself. It

smelled too much of the emigrant ship, and recalled the days when he had worked with pickaxe and shovel at digging up New York streets. Giovanni had a supreme contempt for the creature that he *was* before he entered upon the halcyon days of taking care of the furnaces of the quality, and incidentally feeding on the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. He even had a vista of a future when he might be an indoor man, polishing up the handles of the big front doors, and then, who knows? a head waiter in a restaurant where there was macaroni galore. To this end, no doubt, Giovanni had invested his hard-earned savings in this marvellous dress-suit. Alas that it should be dragged through the filth and scum of Hester Street!

But it is a long lane that has no turning, and their path soon turns from the noisome streets into a clean well-swept passage-way, and up a stairway to a well-lighted room, where are tables, chairs, and a piano and

gentlemen. Surely Giovanni feels himself in good company once more, and is tempted to throw aside that covering which obscures his gay person from the public gaze. Unwary one! There are others besides those friendly gentlemen. There are rows of boys, — boys that are none too good for human nature's daily food, and boys with a fine sense of humor. Awed by the presence of two such fine-looking ladies, these boys might have been still half an hour; but the Italian! he was one of them.

"Oh, the Dago, see the Dago dude! Oh, my, where did you git that hat? My eye, look at the posy. Ain't he a daisy?" rose in a simultaneous cry from the boys seated and standing about the Club-room, in eager expectation of what entertainment the evening might furnish. Mrs. Prince saw that she had extricated herself from one difficulty only to fall into another, and she hastened to explain to Harold the presence and ap-

pearance of her extraordinary escort. With ready wit, Harold seized upon the point of vantage, and, clapping his hands to call the boys to order, said: "Boys, this young man, Giovanni Laparello, is going to have his picture drawn for us, and my friend Lewis Prince is going to draw it here before us. Want to see him do it?"

"Fire ahead!" cried one voice. "Take the Dago's picture," cried another, while a general murmur of approval ran through the room.

Giovanni himself, slightly startled by the turn of affairs, and somewhat loath to make himself any more conspicuous, was only persuaded to carry out his part of the programme by a promise of a generous gift of money from Lewis, who knew the Italian well enough to understand where he was weakest.

He then seated himself on the platform with the air of a Narcissus, sure that no

canvas could do justice to his charms. Lewis unrolled his drawing-paper, tacked it on the wall, and, showing his charcoal pieces and stumping-wads to the boys, proceeded to sketch with bold strokes the outline of the Italian boy's figure, not omitting the various eccentricities of his costume. Soon the sketch assumed a likeness which appealed to the boys, and they began to stamp and to whistle, and fill the air with amusing and characteristic comments.

"Now ain't that bully?"

"Don't forget the posy, Mister."

"And that necktie, Mister."

"Look at your mug now, Mr. Italian."

It was entirely a new experience to Lewis, and one which he endured with great credit to his breeding and temper, but it was one which did not encourage Nan for the ordeal before her, and her pulses ran cold and hot as Lewis's drawing gained completion and with bold and rapid strokes and careful

rubbing he produced the shadows which completed the likeness and brought out the wildest enthusiasm.

But Nan's apprehensions were premature, for the boys were too well satisfied with the rough sketch of the Italian to let the artist go at once.

"Give us something purty, give us your sister," one lad called out, making a mistake which it seemed unnecessary to correct, though Harold said, —

"This young lady, my cousin, is going to do something else for you, boys; she will play the violin for you."

"Let 's hear her do it. Give us the fiddle. Will she dance too?"

Strong and fearless, and now stirred with the impulse to help as well as amuse, Nan felt a curious admixture of feelings as these various cries met her ears and she looked over the audience and their Club-room. It was scrupulously clean, and a fresh coat of

new paint added to the general air of wholesomeness. The walls were hung with a number of good photographs, and, shining above all, Hoffman's picture of the one perfect Boy Christ; at one end were well-filled book-shelves and a piano, and an open door gave a glimpse of a workshop where a carpenter's bench and many tools told of evenings spent in work.

The boys themselves were a hybrid lot, many of them Italians, Spanish, Hebrews, and Poles, with temperaments more or less poetic and melancholy; here and there the Irish boy, with his quick wit and happy-go-lucky temperament; but the general amalgamation was the New York street boy.

Nan hardly knew how to separate these types herself, as she glanced over her audience before she drew her bow. To her they were just boys who had no conception of her world, — her mountains and her lake. Something not of herself made her touch

the weird and tender chords of "The Scarlet Sarafan," an air simple in its melody, but pathetic and heartrending, as is so much of the Russian music. A little lad paler than the rest, with wistful dark eyes, dropped his head into his hands and let the tears rain through his fingers, and not one of those untutored little waifs offered in any way to tease or torment him for it. Nan had her audience fast, and the shuffling feet were still and the awkward hands forgot to fumble, as, without waiting for applause, she guided her bow through grave measures to gay, ending with a lively tarantelle. The little fellows were familiar enough with the Bowery theatres to think applause of the loudest kind in order, as Nan at last put down her violin, and with whistling and stamping signify their approval of this last number of the programme.

"That was just boss; give us some more, Miss."

Two or three of the younger boys came fearlessly forward, and seemed eager to touch Nan's hand. The little lad who had been most moved by the "Sarafan" said timidly: "Would you come some day and play to my grandmother? She is sick, and some days the young ladies from the other College House come. My grannie loves music." Nan met Mrs. Prince's eye a moment, and saw only benevolence and interest, so that she ventured to say, —

"Yes, perhaps; but what is your name, and where do you live?"

"Paul Ludovic, and I live in Madison Street."

Stephen Whittemore then stepped forward and said to Mrs. Prince: "The little fellow is a Russian, and lives with his grandmother in Madison Street. He is under the special care of the young ladies of the College Settlement, who have been teaching him English and caring for his grandmother.

It would be a kindness if you could go to see her some day, Nan. I will give you a card to one of the young ladies. What day could you go?"

"Next Saturday," said Nan, still looking into the face of the little Russian.

Stephen consulted a note-book in his pocket, then took out a card and wrote a name on it, saying, as he handed it to Nan, —

"That is the young lady in charge next Saturday;" and what Nan read was — Miss Margaret Eliot.

CHAPTER IV.

A LIGHT THROUGH PAUL'S WINDOW. — GIOVANNI DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF.

"IF you are bound to go, Nan, I am going with you." Lewis and Nan stood in the library, facing each other, and neither of them looking very well pleased with the situation.

"I promised Paul I would go, and a promise is a promise. There is n't the slightest need of your going, Lewis. I can find my way, or I can go with Miss Eliot. If your mamma had n't a headache, I would arrange it."

"Well, one thing is certain, if you are bound to go, I am going with you."

"But you have your fencing-lesson, and did n't you say those fellows were coming

to arrange for the football game for next Saturday ?"

"Well, so they were ; but I can send a messenger to them to postpone the meeting till this afternoon, for you are not going into that place alone, Nan Ratcliffe, if you can box."

"Then I 'll give it up ; though Paul will be so disappointed, I hate to," said Nan, turning to put away her violin case, which she had brought out with the intention of keeping her promise to the little Russian.

"No, you shall not give it up, I 'll go with you. I 'll ring up a messenger and send a despatch to the boys, then we 'll hurry off without disturbing mamma ;" and suiting his action to his words, Lewis went to the little messenger call-box, and soon had his note to the captain of his football team on the way. Nan in the meantime again put her violin in place, and swung it over her shoulder, refusing Lewis's aid in carrying it.

"You always swing it wrong, Lewis, thank you just the same. I hate to have you go."

"Well, we won't quarrel about it. Perhaps we 'd better leave a note for Lucille to give to mamma when she wakes up. I 'll scratch one off: —

"MOTHER DEAR, — Nan and I are off to the slums. Nan would have it that the Russian grandmother would die if she did not get there to-day with her violin. I will bring her home all right by lunch-time. I shall take an umbrella and a fierce countenance, and Nan is wearing her touch-me-not air. Hope you will feel better by and by."

It was Saturday morning in Madison Street, and aside from the fact that a small number of the pawnshops in the vicinity were closed or pretended to be closed out of respect for the Jewish Sabbath, there were other noticeable differences in the air of Madison Street on Saturday morning. It

was so-called cleaning-day, and in so far as the generous show of brooms and water could effect that result, the tenement houses in Madison Street were cleaner on Saturday mornings than on other days. Paul knew this, and he also knew that there were times when their janitress allowed certain domestic matters to interfere with the weekly washing of the halls and stairs. A drunken husband or a sick baby might seriously delay this good office, and Mrs. Flannigan had been known to let the friendly call of a talkative neighbor postpone indefinitely the periodical cleaning of the premises. Paul on this particular Saturday morning wished to make sure that none of these obstacles stood in the way of having the noble entrance of No. 600 Madison Street swept and garnished, for he had not forgotten the promise of the young lady to bring her violin and play to his grandmother. No. 600 Madison Street had, like many of its tenants and many

of its neighbors, seen better days. In the good old days when New York society had courted the sea, No. 600 had been a residence of noble proportions and fine adornment. Anybody with a proper recognition of beauty could discern the high lineage of No. 600 by the fan-shaped semicircle over the front door, the inside blinds, which in their first estate had shone with the purest of white Florentine paint, the curving balustrade, and stuccoed cornices. How spacious those rooms had once been, only some very ancient ladies could tell, for within the memory of this and other generations they had been drawn and quartered to suit the vandal purposes of the landlord and the fast-growing population of the East Side.

Too many people were eager to live in that salubrious neighborhood to allow any one family the luxury of one of those spacious rooms in No. 600 Madison Street, and so sometimes there were two families and

sometimes there were four in the quondam drawing-room of the old New York mansion.

Paul and his grandmother had a corner room, divided by a curtain, on the top of this great house, where lived ten other families. This little corner had perhaps in the good old days been a dressing-room for some young lady, but its one window looked out long, long ago over flowery fields and beyond to the East River, and now only by craning his neck could Paul even see the blue sky above, for high buildings reared their smoky heads behind, beside, and beyond. Still Paul liked to know there was a window which would open and let in a little air, even if it was not very fresh air, which after whirling above alleys and gutters quite full of unpleasant rubbish came in to stir his curls. But the window itself was not a bad sort of window. It still kept those aristocratic blinds which belonged to better days, and

there were some panes of glass left that were clear and good, though many had been broken and replaced by panes of a much cheaper kind. Paul spent a great deal of time in washing that window, and that Saturday morning he cleaned it very, very hard, and he had gone up and down stairs many times with water to make everything as clean as his little hands could scrub it, and it filled his little heart with sorrow to note that Mrs. Flannigan was very late in her Saturday morning work. Then Paul had an inspiration. Mrs. Flannigan's baby had been very fretful of late; perhaps if he should offer to amuse her for an hour, the portress would be able to accomplish the task of removing the week's dirt from the halls and stairs before the arrival of his guests. Paul would have liked to confide to the portly janitress the great pleasure in store for his grandmother, but on this point he had misgivings. It was Mrs. Flannigan's husband who

vowed to "drive all them snobs out of the neighborhood, and them fine ladies too. It was none of they's business how much beer a man drank, nor how many clothes his wife had, nor what his babies had to eat, and if they come nosing round my premises I'll see to it they don't come but onct."

In spite of Mike Flannigan, the little Flannigans were cared for every day at the Kindergarten, but his wife held her tongue about that. Still Paul thought it wise to say nothing about the prospects of guests this morning, but only to peep quietly into the basement window, to discover if it were the baby or Mike, and his heart grew lighter when he saw the janitress rocking the teething baby to and fro.

"Please, Mrs. Flannigan, if I'll take the baby up to my window, she'll be good for a while!"

"That's a good boy, for she's that fretful

I can do nothin' at all, and Mike himself loafing the streets this day."

A queer little pain seized Paul's heart, and he put both hands on the brawny arms of the big Irishwoman, and, looking up into her face with his sad brown eyes, said, —

"Oh, she is coming to-day, Mrs. Flannigan, the girl with the fiddle. Mike would n't hurt her, would he?"

"The Lord knows what he 'd do, he 's that ugly. Is it a real lady she is?"

"Just a real lady! only a girl with a fiddle. She will make Russian music for grannie."

"Fiddlin' for the old lady, is it? Maybe she 'll come when Mike 's not about. It 's me must be washing them halls if real ladies is coming. Be she a Settlement girl? It 's them Mike can't abide the sight of."

Leaving the fretful baby to Paul's tender care, Mrs. Flannigan was mounting the stone basement steps to the street, a wooden

pail of water with a scant sprinkling of soap in one hand, and a broom in the other.

She had reached the sidewalk and paused, with her customary interest in the affairs of the great world of Madison Street, to observe the passing crowd.

"There 's that Mike now, and them good-for-nothing Murphies, — as sure 's my name is Bridget Flannigan there 's Paul's young lady with the fiddle and a fine dandy of a young gent. How 'll Mike like to see them walking up the steps of No. 600?"

Mike had seen them coming and, being in that state of fight induced by spending a morning in a saloon, he stepped out from his position against a lamp-post, and blocked the passage of Nan and Lewis by saying, —

"Where you goin', my fine dude and miss? — no place this for dudes."

"Step aside and let us pass," said Lewis, putting out his hand and pushing the man back so that Nan should have a free passage.

and it was but a second before he was on the scene of action, jerking Mike Flannigan by the broad shoulders away from his victim, not without a protest from Mike. "And it 's you, Mr. Parson, that 's down on the saloons, is it? Just wait till I get a hold of you!"

Nan, not wanting in courage, but instinctively shrinking from the unpleasant publicity of this encounter and really afraid she might lose her violin, was about to yield to Mrs. Flannigan's invitation to share the basement hospitality, when a new element presented itself in the figure of Giovanni flying down Madison Street, waving a huge stick and followed by one of New York's grenadier policemen. It was not plain to Nan whether the policeman was in pursuit of Giovanni or not, but it was quite apparent that the Italian wished to be in the midst of the fight.

Seeing the Irishman beginning an attack upon Harold, Giovanni brought his stick down on the assailant's head; but he had no

sooner dealt this valiant blow for the defence of his friend than he felt the grip of the officer of the law on his shoulder, while the Irishman had an equally surprising sensation.

"How now, what is this?" said the officer; "has the fellow attacked you, Mr. Ratcliffe?" for Harold was well known.

Hal called Lewis to explain the situation, and Giovanni in his mongrel language explained that Mrs. Prince had sent him "fast, very fast, to find the young lady and the young gentleman;" and so he come quick — he run most of ze way, and when he see big fight, he tought dey kill Master Lewis!

So the terrified Italian, on the testimony to his good character given by Harold, was released, and Mike carried off to a quiet Sunday in jail, while Nan said somewhat wofully, after much more parley and explanations, "And now for Paul."

"Oh, it was Paul you were looking for, Nan. I think you'll hardly go slumming

again without an escort, but such a thing does n't happen once in six months. I 'll go up with you to Paul's room. Giovanni can go to the Club-room and wait a few minutes; later I will telephone to Mrs. Prince, who is evidently anxious."

The next day, after the exciting scenes had been rehearsed for the amusement of the little boys and the discomfiture of Mrs. Prince, Nan wrote to her mother as follows: —

My dear Mamma, — Such a strange thing has happened, the kind of thing that you never would expect would happen to me, and now at last I can repay the dear old Count for all he has done for me. We thought we must telegraph, but then it seemed better to write the astonishing news that we think we have found the Count's little boy and his poor old mother! It all came out of Harold's Settlement Club. I wrote you about our going there and of the poor little Russian lad who begged me to come and play to him. Well, yesterday Lewis and I went over. We had a little adventure too of our own, but that does n't count a bit just here. We went through queer streets till we

found the number Paul had given us, and just before that we met Cousin Hal and he took us up the dark staircases to Paul's poor little home. He was sitting there, mammy dear, looking, oh, so wistfully, out of one window, the only window he has, and seeing nothing but black, dirty old buildings, and looking as though he wished he could see my dear old hills. But he shall, bless the boy! soon. Well, his poor old grandmother is dying, and she was in bed, quite feeble and old. She wanted me to play for her because Paul told her I knew some Russian airs. I played my "Schone Minka" and the "Red Sarafan!" Oh, dear me, mother, she was nearly wild over it, and I could n't understand a word she jabbered in Russian. But Paul told us. She knew that her son must have taught me that air, for nobody else ever played it like that. Then Harold asked Paul who his father was, and why his grandmother felt so badly about the music. Then Paul told us that his father had to escape from Russia because he was suspected of having something to do with some socialist societies, and he had left Paul with his mother, who soon died, and then the old grandmother had taken all the money she could get, but the Czar had taken most of their estates, and she came to

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America, and they had been all over the country, to Chicago and San Francisco, wherever they heard of Russians, looking for his father, and at last had spent almost all of their money and had found themselves obliged to live in poorer quarters all the time till they had come at last to these slums where Harold lived. They knew so little English, and the old woman is so feeble, everybody cheated them. Then Harold thought how much Ludovisky was like Lodoff, and how much Paul looked like our Count, and now we are perfectly sure it is his own little boy. And Harold is writing all this to the Count to-day, and we can hardly wait till we hear whether the Count did have a little boy, and if he did n't, if Paul is n't his little boy at all, won't he take him when his grandmother dies, for she can't live very long, and let him have a good look at the hills and the blue sky, and a window that looks somewhere, and somebody to talk Russian with?

Oh, mamma, does n't it seem to be too good to be true, and a real fairy tale? Do have papa start the Count off as soon as he can, for Lewis and I can hardly wait for the end.

Your loving NAN.

CHAPTER V.

THE END OF THE FAIRY TALE.

"TELEGRAMS, telegrams! My! won't old Jasper writhe?" said Lewis, looking at half a dozen yellow envelopes enclosing messages sent from Chicopee within two days.

"Our poor old station-master! Do you remember last year, when Marshall's team won the football game, Jasper flatly refused to send our telegrams of congratulations?" said Nan. "When we were all dancing with delight over the news, he said, 'Ain't going to send no sich tomfoolnonsense over these yere wires so long as I has the handling of them.'"

"Yes, and you had to drive five miles to Buckfield to get the message off," said Lewis. "He 's a queer chap."

"But the funniest and what nearly became the sorriest mistake was," Nan continued, "when old Squire Harris was dying and he wanted to see his niece once more. She was his favorite niece, but had become a Sister of Charity, and the Squire was so angry over it that he would n't have anything to do with her. But when he was dying they sent a message to New York to 'Sister Agnes, Trinity Mission.' Old Jasper looked at it and said, 'Squire ain't got no sister Agnes, must be his wife's sister, and they 's that crazy they forgot the hind name. His wife was a Scott of Burlington. Now I 'll fix that into something like "Miss Agnes Scott, Trinity Mission."' It found Sister Agnes, but it was a wonder it did. Jasper thinks it is awfully extravagant to telegraph even if he does come in for part of the money, and when the boys telegraph to papa about their coming up in the summer, he storms and rages. What

will he make of these? Here is the first one, —

"'Letter received. Count overcome. How old is the boy?'

"*Second one.* 'How long can the woman live? Count will come.'

"*Third one.* 'It is the Count's son. Get doctor for mother.'

"*Fourth.* 'Count will start to-morrow. Move mother to good quarters if possible.'

"*Fifth.* 'Count started. Telegraph to Boston if the mother should die.'

"*Sixth.* 'Hospital for the mother, yes. Take boy to Mrs. Prince's.'"

"And ours must be as interesting to old Jasper as these were," said Lewis, taking up a memorandum, —

"'Paul is eleven years old.'

"'The grandmother might live a week or a month if in good quarters.'

"'Doctor advises hospital.'

"'Everything done as desired. Paul will remain here.'"

The house had been quivering with excitement for the past three days, ever since that Saturday escapade in Madison Street, and now it was Tuesday afternoon. Mrs. Prince had already started for New York to meet the Count in her carriage, and in another hour they would arrive at the house.

Nan and Lewis were in a state of agitation which bordered on hysterics. Lewis had paced up and down the halls, pounded the piano, and teased his dog. Nan had tied knots in her handkerchief, drank a dozen glasses of water, and explored every corner of the house in vain search for one more article to add to the comfort of the Count's apartments. Trying to recall the various appointments of the Hermitage, she had brought every kind of a bachelor luxury into use, from shaving-glass to ash-tray and pipes, and finally crowned her acts of devotion by laying her violin on the altar of affection. She could think of nothing else, and so she

and Lewis had met in the library to laugh and sport when they both felt like crying. It seemed strange that of all the household the one least disturbed by the anticipated arrival was the one most nearly affected. Paul, taken from the forlorn place he had called home in Madison Street, and made, for the time being, thoroughly at home by the little Prince boys, seemed calm and unperturbed. Harry and Wolcott had taken possession of him, and each vied with the other in arousing the interest of their guest in his treasures. Steamships that would go, railroad trains that would collide, horses that would neigh and donkeys that would bray, all passed before the little stranger's eyes, and were like things in a dream. Paul neither laughed nor cried; he handled the boys' playthings and put them down, and they in a measure excited his boyish interest, but he was hardly more than half awake to the pleasant things about him,

and was but dimly conscious that in a short time he should see his father. The fact that his grandmother had been separated from him filled his little heart to the exclusion of everything else. "They," the pretty nurses in the Settlement, had told him that she would be taken care of in the hospital, and that soon he should go to see her. Paul had suffered so much; the little fellow had had so much trouble that one more seemed only inevitable, but if he were n't such a big boy, he would like to keep close to the girl "Nan," whose eyes were so friendly and kind. He had n't had much of a chance at playthings, and there were so many things in his life that had been anything but play. The recollection of a good dinner and a good breakfast, and a room with three clear windows out of which he could see trees and sky, was the most vividly pleasant part of his present experience, and, sitting on the floor in Harry's room, watch-

ing the wheels of Harry's "Great Eastern" go round, his little heart began to long for that friendly girl; and when Harry and Wolcott went in search of greater wonders, Paul leaped to his feet and made his way to the staircase, and, following the sound of voices below, groped blindly for the light of that kind face he had begun to love. And it was Nan who met the wistful little lad half-way. A glance at Lewis said volumes, and Lewis, knowing how the little boys always liked to have Nan to themselves, vanished with great speed; and Paul, seeing something in that kind face which opened his heart, put his little hands beseechingly together with the mute gesture of the foreigner, and whispered, "I want to see my grandmother."

"Oh, Paul dear," said Nan, taking the boy's thin hands in her strong ones, "you shall see her this very afternoon, but in a very few minutes you will see your good father. You think you do not remember

him, Paul dear, but I know you will soon love him and he will love you. He is my friend, you know, Paul, and he taught me to play the violin, and by and by he will take you to his house, and you will see mountains all covered with snow, and in the summer time such woods, and my lake — my home. You love the woods and the birds, and you will grow big and strong, Paul, and my own little brother Robbie will be your playmate. You will like Robbie, Paul, and he will like you, and I shall be happy to think that he has a playmate now that I am here. Won't that be fine, Paul? Now you will be glad to see your papa, Paul dear, for it is so long since he has had his little boy and — Hark! that is the carriage; shall we open the door?"

And it so happened that the very first one to meet the Count was Nan standing at the open door with Paul's hand in hers.

To speak Russian, to hear once more

the words of home, — Paul could not long remain indifferent to that unspeakable bliss. Soon the child's lips were unsealed, and an hour later all fears of this new-found parent had fled from Paul's heart, and, seated on his father's knee, he poured out in long-pent-up language the story of their wanderings.

"To think," said the Count, "that I in my safe refuge had no knowledge of this! When I was landed here first, I wished to avoid my compatriots. I had many enemies among the Nihilists, for I am not and never was a Nihilist, and I sought and found that secluded spot, my Paradise, in New Hampshire. It would have been unsafe for me to try to communicate with my friends in Russia, but I counted upon being forgotten, and then to return and find my wife, my boy, and my mother."

"Shall we not go to see her now, my dear Count?" said Mrs. Prince. "You will

find her very feeble, and the joy of seeing you will be very great."

"Come, let us go to see grandmamma," said Paul, tugging at his father's hand; and soon they were on their way to the hospital.

A week later Nan read this letter from Chicopee: —

My dear little Girl, — I can hardly tell you with what joy we received the dear old Count and his little boy on Tuesday. Of course the Count feels very badly over the death of his mother, but she could hardly have rallied from the shock and surprise of seeing him. The little boy is devoted to him, and we are all so pleased with him. He and Robbie are already great friends; and the Count has promised to close up the Hermitage earlier than usual this fall, and come to us next week, and he and Paul and Ivan will fill in part the place left empty by our dear daughters. The little boy found some photographs of you in my room, and kissed them reverently as if you were a saint. It gave me quite a new idea of my wild Nan, and perhaps you have found a mission we never dreamed for you,

by bringing the spirit of your happy, healthy self into those distorted city lives. May all your work be as fruitful of good as this has been, dear! although this seems like a miracle.

Good-night, little daughter. Marian sends her love and asks for a letter. She is very happy in her home, and Herbert's wound is quite well once more.

Lovingly, MOTHER.

And Nan did not sleep before writing to her little brother at Chicopee: —

MY DEAR BOBBIE, — Heigho! How I would just like to take a run up to Chicopee to-day to see how you and Paul are getting along! Now, Bobby dear, do you remember the story Marian used to read to us about the little Prince who did not know how to laugh, because the spiteful old fairy that was n't invited to his christening had cast some evil spell over him? And then when they tried all the doctors and all the old wise women to find some way to make him laugh, somebody said, Take him to Mother Earth. Then do you remember they took him down to the brook in the moonlight, and there he saw the man in the moon sailing by, and the old cow

looked into the brook and saw the moon too, and jumped over it, — over the brook of course, — "and the little dog laughed to see such sport, and the dish ran away with the spoon," and then the little Prince began to laugh, and he laughed and he laughed, till everybody thought he was daft.

Well, now, Bobby dear, Paul is very much like that sad little Prince, and if I could only go home for a while, I should just give my time to making him laugh. But as I must stay here and study and study, I want you to do all you can to make him laugh. Don't you think he would like to tie the old peacock fly-brush about his waist and strut around the hen-yard, and call on Mrs. Brahmapootra and Mr. Cochin China, and see Lady Priscilla gather her Plymouth Rockets under her wing? or perhaps if he does n't think that any fun, try him with rubber boots and the big puddle in the meadow. How I wish I could try it myself — splash — splash — oh, what fun! And oh, Robbie, don't get discouraged! If all these fail, there are the autumn leaves. Just make up the biggest pile you can on the side of the hill and show him how to roll over them. But first of all, Bobkins, you must see that he has all the best things to eat, — milk toast, and griddle-

cakes, and his pockets full of apples and chestnuts; and if he does n't learn to laugh then, well, I shall have to bring Jill up to dance hornpipes for him and make jokes. Jill, Bobinet, is my school-girl friend. She is the drollest girl in the world, but as clever as can be, with all her nonsense. She is going to Camp Chicopee next summer, and then we shall laugh all the time. Oh, Robbie, I wish I were as rich as — as Mrs. Prince, I would buy a whole island on our lake and take ever so many boys and girls from the city up there every summer, and show them what it means to be strong and well, to have sky and mountains and water instead of brick buildings and sidewalks and poor backs and weak eyes.

It is my castle in Spain now, Bobbie, to give some of the poor sick children a bit of our lake, just as it was papa's to bring the rich city boys to Camp Chicopee. But I must study and work, and you must be good to Paul and make him laugh.

Good-by, dear Bobkins.

Your old NAN.

CHAPTER VI.

A DAY AT SCHOOL AND A FOOTBALL GAME.

"LET Nan Ratcliffe see it?"

"Nan, Nansie, Anna Ratcliffe!"

Of course it was Jill's teasing voice which greeted Nan's ears, as she entered the sewing-room, where a dozen girls stood about one object of admiration, — a hat, just finished by Gertrude Sands. Nan, who had been called from the laboratory, where she had assisted at an interesting chemical experiment, which she had enjoyed with an intensity born of a scientific nature, brought to the millinery department some regret, which was not easily to be thawed into enthusiasm, even by so marvellous a structure as Gertrude's hat; but Jill would not allow her to regard it indifferently.

It was truly a masterpiece, and Nan was the single girl in Division B who did not envy Gertrude the possession and creation of it.

"That would just suit you, Nan; try it on," said Gertrude. "Only you ought to put your hair up in a tight knot, and you would look ever so stylish."

"A hat! I am the last person to know anything about a hat. My idea of a hat is an Alpine in winter, and a sailor in summer; and as for doing my hair up, humph! no hairpins, thank you, for me for a good long time yet. All my fun would be gone if I had to bother about such things. Oh, girls, did you know the Poly boys are to play the Pratts next Saturday?"

"There, Nan, just try it on, and you can trim one yourself to wear to the game," said Gertrude, insisting on Nan's placing the top-heavy hat on her head. "There, girls, does n't she look stylish?"

"It is ever so pretty and stylish, Gertrude, but your style, not mine," said Nan, taking off the hat and turning it around with a careful survey of knots, bows, wings, etc.

"That 's so, Nan, — it is n't your style," said Jill, whose admiration for Nan's independence and force increased daily. "But what will you do when it is your turn to trim, as it will be next week, — for if you insist upon having no trimmings on your hats, you 'll have to trim for some one else."

"Oh, yes, I have a customer for my first hat, though she may back out when she sees the hat," said Nan, not telling the girls that her first customer was Mrs. Prince's parlor-maid.

By this time the girls had seated themselves for work, and after a few designs were handed around, some cotton flannel strips were distributed with which the girls practised the mysteries of making rosettes and tying bows. A few had models well ad-

vanced in cotton flannel trimming, and some were working upon real silk and velvet, their own materials.

"My bows remind me of a cotton flannel Bunny I used to play with when I was a child," said Nan, pulling up the ears of her pink cotton flannel bows with increasing dexterity, but not much enthusiasm, although the fact that her prospective hat trimming was for Polly the parlor-maid lent some zeal to her practice.

"I wonder if Polly likes Alsatians or ears," thought Nan. Then she asked aloud of the teacher, —

"Are Alsatian bows hard to make, Mrs. Mitchell?"

"Alsatian bows are all out, you are way behind. Loops and big ruchy things are the style, and end bows like these," said Jill, giving a touch to her cotton flannel that transformed the whole to an animated fashion plate.

"You have a real touch, Miss Brinkerhoff," said the teacher.

"So glad, — I have been looking for a vocation for some time. I had set my heart on being a Lilliputian fairy, but my family don't consider it a respectable calling. Do you think I could be a head milliner? No pun, girls, 'pon honor."

"You could never be anything but a head milliner, my dear; you are too saucy for a subordinate," said Mrs. Mitchell.

"There 's always room at the top," said Jill, shaking her absurd little round head saucily.

"If you can't go ahead, you can go afoot. You can always dance, Jill," said Gertrude.

"Those who dance must pay the fiddler. My hats shall pay the fiddlers."

"Whose designs are these?" said Mrs. Mitchell, taking up some drawings which lay on the table.

"Those are some things of mine," said

Jill, with a demure modesty quite unlike her manner of a moment before.

"Those are really very good, Jill," said the teacher. "They have quite a striking originality. We will use two of these for our models next week."

"Good, Jill! did n't I tell you so?" whispered Nan, at the same time patting Jill's brown head.

"I did n't think they were good for anything," said Jill.

"They are the best we have had this month," said Mrs. Mitchell, putting them in her drawer with the impress of her "Good" on them.

Jill was as still as a church mouse after that, and worked in a painstaking way through the hour till the gong sounded the noon recess, when, as it were in a second, every student in the Technical Department seemed to swarm the corridors, luncheon in hand and tongues unloosed, — girls in twos

and threes together, boys in larger groups. A few made haste to eat a sandwich or an apple, then bounded out of the building to the tennis ground across the street. Among these were Jill and Nan, who were challenged by two of the boy students to a set at tennis.

Nan could not endure the long confinement without some fresh air, and the chance to escape from the building brought a glow to her cheeks. A few of the boys she knew slightly in the class-rooms, but they all had an admiration for the cool-headed calm girl from New Hampshire, and a few of them had watched her at tennis, and once in a while broke up the girls' set by challenging Nan to a game.

"We are going to play the Polytechnics at football next Saturday, Miss Ratcliffe," said Vaughn Brown. "It 'll be a great game. I suppose our fellows will lose, but it 's something for them to play with us."

"I am glad you are going to try," said

Nan, "but I don't believe you 'll win. I have a friend on the Poly team, and he says it 's the best eleven they ever had."

"Will you go out to see it?"

"Oh, yes, I expect to."

Then they began to bat, Fifteen, forty-five, Vantage game, Love all,—chiming the mystic rhythmic counts of the game of tennis.

There was something about Vaughn that Nan liked. She always struck "straight out from the shoulders," as the boys said, at a fellow's best points. Vaughn had a fine, honest face, though of humble origin. He was by education and antecedents entirely unlike the boys whom she knew best. He was not one of the boys of the slums whom she could offer to help, neither was he one of her friends like Marshall or Lewis. He happened to sit near her in the class-room, and had occasionally picked up her book and once sharpened her pencils, but without any show of gallantry or flirtation, such as marked

the behavior of some of the boys to the other girls. He was marvellously quick at mathematics, and accurate in the chemical laboratory, but in literature and history his recitations were dull and without appreciation; yet he was a hard worker, and stood out signally among the boys as a leader in the class-room and at sports. Even Nan, unaccustomed as she was to school work, could see that the girls were the best students in the highest courses, but in the work-rooms the boys brought something to bear upon their task that the girls had not. The boys had elected Vaughn Brown their captain on the football team, and Nan could not help observing him very closely as they played their game, thinking of the team of well-trained players they were to meet next Saturday; for Nan would not have been Nan

"If in the fall
Her young girl's fancy
Did not turn to thoughts of ball."

She and Lewis had made a careful survey of the teams that would come into the field in November, and it would have been hard indeed to find either of them wanting in accurate knowledge of the make-up of all the great school and college teams, — from Princeton, which was distinguished for Nan by Marshall's being a member, and Yale, which Princeton must beat, to Columbia, and the younger boys of the preparatory schools against which Lewis's team might be called to try their novice skill. To Princeton's game they all looked as the Mecca of their autumn hopes. It was the date to and from which everything was counted. On that day the Chicopee boys within reach would mount the famous Chicopee tally-ho, and, winding the horn through avenues and boulevards, drive out to join the great crowd at the polo ground. But that great day was still several weeks ahead, and the smaller games were only anticipatory of the great

occasion. Second to Marshall's Princeton game, Lewis's Poly game against the Pratt team seemed of most importance to Nan. It was not strange, then, that Vaughn Brown as his antagonist should claim more than a passing notice from Nan, but that they would have anything more than a general encounter she would not have dreamed. Yet when the eventful day arrived and she with a score or more girls and several teachers found themselves close to the field at the great park, Nan found her interest more than centred in those two boys. Jill, of course, eagerly scanning the field, followed Nan's eyes to the entrance of the Polytechnic team, and only through Nan's eyes saw anything but madness in their surging movements.

"They look like blond buffaloes," said Jill. "Why do they wear such long hair?"

Nan looked down at her small companion with a glance of surprise. To think that Jill with all her cleverness should know so little

of football as to ask such an absurd question! But Jill was so evidently asking for information that Nan answered, —

"Why, to save their heads from being cracked, I suppose."

"I don't think that will make any difference," said Jill.

The game moved on with spirit and about equal success, full of minute interest for Nan, who had never seen a real match game before. She found her sympathies strangely vacillating between her own team and Lewis's eleven. Suddenly she saw Lewis seize the ball and make a bold rush through the Pratt's rush line. He had nearly skirted the field and was directly opposite their position, when out dashed Vaughn Brown, seized Lewis, and threw him beyond the bounds, thus preventing his touchdown. Lewis threw up his hands and cried to the referee, —

"Foul — it was a foul — he tackled me below the waist."

"I did not," said Vaughn, his honest face flushing crimson at the suggestion; then turning towards the fence where Nan stood, pale and sorrowful, with the words on her lips, "Oh, Lewis, it was not a foul." But Lewis saw nothing.

"You did, you cad, and you lie."

Lewis's voice rang out clear and throbbing with passion. Vaughn started as if Lewis's charge had cut him keenly. His hands clenched; he shut his mouth firmly, and took a quick step towards Lewis, who stood with his head up and darting angry looks at him.

"Row, row!" shouted some excited youngsters standing near; but their voices brought Vaughn to a realizing sense of the situation. He drew a long breath and then said in a low voice, —

"Prince, you know I did not tackle you below the waist. I think that you ought to apologize."

Lewis stared at Vaughn, and then a flush came over his face. He acted as if he were going to speak, when the game was renewed. From now on until the end of the first half of the game it seemed to Nan that Lewis did not play with his usual snap, and she wondered if his heart accused him of his conduct to Vaughn. In a few minutes the first three quarters was over; and as the players ran from the field, Nan's heart gave a glad leap when she saw Lewis coming quickly towards Vaughn, who was standing near her throwing on his great-coat.

"Brown," said Lewis, with evident effort, "I — I believe I do owe you an apology; at least — at least," he stammered, "for the language I used."

"I will at least admit you do," replied Vaughn, in a quiet tone of voice and with rather a look of contempt in his eye, as he turned away, apparently without noticing the feeble movement Lewis made as if to offer his hand.

Nan's heart sank. Her spirits drooped, and when the game was resumed she watched the play with dull interest. Lewis, on the contrary, went into the game with mad energy. Again and again he made a dashing run with the ball that brought out cheers from the Poly boys. He battered at the Pratt rush line as if he had no sense of danger to himself or his opponents. Vaughn played with characteristic, cool determination, and inspired his side to stand firm. But the Poly boys were too strong for them, and before long the Pratt boys were steadily pushed down the field, until Lewis was shoved over their line for a touchdown. Then he kicked a pretty goal, and a few minutes later, when the game was over, he was carried off the field in triumph by his cheering schoolmates.

But there was one who did not congratulate Lewis, and that was Nan. He knew she had heard him accuse Vaughn falsely,

and he did not enjoy his triumph, though he pretended to. Nan quickly slipped away from the field and the teachers and Jill, who was effervescing with good spirits. She had seen only the comic side of the game, and as she had friends on the Poly eleven she did not take the defeat of her own team much to heart.

"Oh, Nan, don't you think Lewis just played a splendid game? Aren't you proud of him?"

But Nan gave Jill a sorrowful look, which caused her to exclaim, "Why, what's the matter, Nan?"

Nan made no reply, but, nodding to Jill, slipped out of the car and was soon in her room, where she threw herself on her bed and cried as though her heart would break. But when she heard Lewis come into his room a few moments later and pitch his things around as if out of sorts with himself in spite of his fine victory, she rose, dried

her eyes, and began to play her violin, resolved that Lewis should know nothing of her grief. Lewis soon finished his dressing, and went down stairs just as his mother and the little boys, who had gone in the carriage, arrived home from the field.

"Say, Lewis, what did you get mad about?" asked Wolcott.

Mrs. Prince said nothing. She had gathered enough from what she had just heard about Lewis's affair with Vaughn Brown to see that her son had behaved in an ungentlemanly manner. Lewis affected to make light of Wolcott's question, but just as Nan came down stairs there was a ring at the door-bell, and as Lewis happened to be at the door with his hand on the knob, he opened it. There stood Vaughn Brown. Lewis stiffened and flushed. Vaughn was visibly embarrassed, and did not appear to see anybody but Lewis. But he gathered himself together instantly, and said, —

"Lewis, I owe you an apology for cutting you short when you were going to say the right thing."

The boys faced each other rather awkwardly a second, and then Lewis, after reddening and shuffling uneasily, broke into a half laugh, —

"That 's all right, Vaughn. I did n't mean what I said. I was excited and — "

"I 'll tell you how it happened, Lewis," Vaughn broke in eagerly. "You saw Jim Melrose coming after you, and I surprised you when I tackled you. Of course you would not have done it if it had n't been unexpected. That is my tackle. Football makes you say lots of queer things. Don't you remember how Fatty Mason yelled, when we downed him, 'You 've broken my hair'?"

The two boys laughed heartily over this, and Lewis said, —

"Look here, Vaughn, that 's a flimsy joke of yours to help me out of a bad scrape; but

it shows you are a good fellow, and I owe you thanks besides the apology."

Vaughn instantly put out his hand, which Lewis grasped, and they shook hands warmly and to their evident relief.

"Won't you come in, Vaughn?" asked Nan, beaming on both boys. Vaughn came in and talked over the game with good humor, giving Lewis's side full credit for good playing. Then Lewis experienced the real pleasure of his victory, and found he had made a new friend in an unexpected quarter.

CHAPTER VII.

NAN TRIES TO LIFT THE CURTAIN OF THE FUTURE.

"SHALL we go to see Daisy to-day?" Mrs. Prince asked at breakfast one Saturday, as the holiday programme was being planned.

The boys exclaimed eagerly, "Oh, yes, mamma; let's go to see Daisy this morning."

"Not you boys to-day, only Nan. Daisy has been ill, and the confusion of seeing so many would be too much for her. But you may all send her something. Wolcott shall get some flowers from the conservatory, Harry get all the illustrated magazines together, and, Lewis, what have you to send?"

"Oh, I bought some color tubes last night with the last of my allowance, thinking you would take us over to-day."

"That was generous of you, dear, and just what she will need when she can use her hands again, for she has lots of Christmas orders, and in spite of my protests wants to fill them."

Nan had soon found that Daisy was a household word at Mrs. Prince's, and that all the best was offered by the boys to a dear little crippled invalid who had spent months in the Prince Ward at one of the large hospitals, enduring severe treatment in the hope of being cured. The day when Nan should be allowed to see her had been looked forward to with eager anticipation; and as they rolled the streets in Mrs. Prince's carriage, Nan wondered how it would seem to be unable to walk at all and be obliged always to drive.

Mrs. Prince was too well known as a

frequent visitor and generous benefactor of the hospital to be kept waiting long. They made their way to a sunny corner room known as the Prince Ward, holding three beds, but one of which was occupied, and that by a golden-haired brown-eyed little creature whom Nan at once recognized from Lewis's description as Daisy.

Mrs. Prince laid flowers and gifts on a little table by the cot, and then took both the little hands in one of hers, saying tenderly as she placed the other caressingly on the white forehead, —

"You are better to-day. I won't kiss you, dear. Doctor says no kissing, you know. Microbes, bacteria, eh, Miss Deering?" this to the nurse, with whom she shook hands cordially. "This is my young friend, Miss Ratcliffe, Miss Deering. You will let her come often to see our little patient, won't you? Yes, she is a big girl for this small room, but she is not boisterous, and will bring

cheer. You and Nan will be friends, Daisy. By and by she shall come and learn from you how to make her Christmas presents," she said, taking up some beautiful pieces of embroidery with which the lame girl's fingers had been busy.

Nan felt strangely cumbersome and awkward before this spiritual little creature, whose hands looked to be too delicate to be touched by her own firm members. If she could only have taken her on her back and carried her about or performed some feat of strength for her benefit, her own emotion would have been relieved; but as it was, she felt foolish and fanciful and asked the nurse irrelevant questions, till Mrs. Prince asked Miss Deering to take her through the hospital. Nan was relieved to get out into the corridors, and Mrs. Prince said to Daisy, —

"She is not used to sick people, and fancies they are suffering more than they are. She

is really not a bit hard-hearted, only a little ashamed to seem soft-hearted."

Miss Deering was a nurse by nature as well as by training, a woman of rare instinct and sympathy. A large hospital experience had brought her into relation with people of all conditions and natures, and she looked at Nan comprehendingly as she said:

"You don't like sick people?"

"Oh, I should like them if I could do anything for them, but I feel so brutally healthy with a little thing like that, I don't know what to do with my hands or feet; and yet when papa is sick, he says no one can nurse him so well. I think I feel more at home with healthy big sick people than frail chronic invalids."

Miss Deering laughed: "Perhaps you would like to go through the men's ward and see some of the big fellows with broken heads or noses."

"I think I would."

That was the first of many visits to the hospital which Nan made during that fall and winter, and the strangeness between the two girls soon melted into friendship.

It was late in November when the two sat together in Daisy's bower surrounded by wonderful creations of silk and worsted.

"My fingers are all thumbs, Daisy. How does that look?" Nan held up a small piece of fancy work over which she had been industriously though not very deftly working for some time.

"That is very much better, Nannie dear. You are improving so much. My Lady will be so pleased with that at Christmas."

"My Lady" was Daisy's name for Mrs. Prince, — a name which she had chosen as sweetest for the gracious lady bountiful, who had done so much to bring her back to health and happiness.

There was no doubt that the little girl was better. Her luminous brown eyes looked

less unearthly though not less beautiful, and her cheeks were rounder. Her little fingers seemed quite strong as they made the needle fly in and out of the delicate mazes of her exquisite fancy work.

"My fingers are all thumbs" was not an unusual exclamation from Nan, and Daisy had often been forced to agree with her; but to-day she said, —

"You must not slander your fingers, Nan; they are improving every day, and will soon outstrip me."

"Oh, I never could do that with my fingers, Daisy. I hate needles, and if it were n't to please Mrs. Prince, I would never touch one. There are some women whom needles suit, but I am not going to be that kind. Give me a knife, a plough, or a club, and I would do better; but a needle! — it fairly dwarfs my intellect. It takes a brownie like you to transform a needle into a sceptre, a true fairy wand. For a

giant like me it is nothing but an instrument of torment, — not torture, that 's too dignified. I never could have had the patience of Elaine and Penelope with their constant stitching. And there was Mathilda, William the Norman's wife, with her old Bayeux tapestries. What martyrs they were! I wish I were n't like that! Hawthorne, in 'Marble Faun,' I believe, says there is always something womanly about a woman who sews; but it was just Hilda's mending Kenyon's glove. I could mend a glove for a man I loved, but it would be because I loved the man, not the mending. Hilda liked her modelling far better than her mending. Do you know, Daisy, Lewis is disgusted with me for wanting to vote, — says he won't like me if I am going to be strong-minded. Do you think I am going to be frumpish and disagreeable?"

Daisy gave an unfathomable sigh, and looked at Nan pityingly, as if she would say,

"You poor thing, beating your wings against a cage with iron bars." "Somebody read to me once something like this, —

"'A woman is too slight a thing,
To trample the world without feeling its sting.'"

"Oh, I know, Daisy, that is from 'Lucile;' but that was written before girls' colleges, I guess, or else it means something else. Some women are frail, clinging things. But I am tiring you, Daisy dear. Let me put away the things. What a lot you have done, and how happy you must be to be able to do something useful!"

"Yes, I did it with my little needle," said Daisy, merrily. "But I can do nothing else."

"Oh, what a brute I am! I was n't thinking of your needle, I was only protesting against the needle for me. I shall always be wishing to do a man's work and be forced back to do a girl's, I suppose."

"No, you won't either, Nan. Did you

ever think of being a trained nurse or a doctor? Miss Deering says you would make a splendid trained nurse."

"I? Such a clumsy, awkward thing as I am?" said Nan, looking around to Miss Deering, who sat at a window reading, though keenly alive to what had been said.

"Yes, Miss Nannie, you have just the temperament for a good nurse, not a mere machine, — steady nerves, a fondness for science, and a splendid constitution. You would do even better to study medicine."

"Oh, I could n't afford that. I want to go to work to help papa before I am twenty, and I was sixteen last September. Only four years more."

"Why not try nursing, and study medicine later?"

"Do you really think I could be gentle enough for a nurse?" asked Nan, thoughtfully.

"The best nurses are not the gentlest women. To be a good nurse, you must have a determined will, and let the patient lean on you rather than wheedle you. One must have quick judgment, presence of mind, and above all cool nerves and strength, — all of which qualities you possess."

"You have given me an idea, Miss Deering. I wonder if I could really do it. How long would I have to study? You know we have a good course in physiology and anatomy at Pratt."

"From eighteen months to two years in the training-school is required here for nurses."

"And is the examination hard?"

"Not for a Pratt high-school girl. Most of the girls who come here have had only a common-school education, and the course of study required is difficult for them. You would be very fairly equipped to begin the study of medicine after your graduation."

"Oh, but that is out of the question. Papa could not afford it, and I think they would like me to study nursing the best. You don't know what a load you have taken off my heart. It has been puzzling me so much. I really did not know what I could fit myself for, unless it was professional ball playing or physical culture. And I am not graceful like Miss Eliot. I don't seem to have any talent except for athletics. Teaching takes so much patience, and I can't stand stupidity. I have thought seriously of running a steamboat round our lake. I knew a girl who did that all one summer. Her father had been captain of the boat and was ill. She went to the Normal School in the winter. She was my great ideal when I was twelve years old. I could do that, I think, for I know just where every snag and rock on our shore is. But to be a nurse or a doctor would be more dignified. Of course there would not always be interest-

ing cases with wounds to bind and ether to administer, but there would be generally a feeling of doing something worth doing, not pottering about with buttons and thread."

"There is plenty of pottering in nursing too. There 's the ambulance, — an accident. I am on duty this hour, — must go down. Miss Perkins will bring your supper, Daisy. Good-by, Miss Nannie."

"Oh, I must go. Good-by, Daisy," said Nan, breathlessly, as the nurse brought in Daisy's tray.

Descending to the lower hall, she caught sight of the ambulance surgeon and the orderlies attending to the patient just brought in.

Miss Deering was passing into the operating-room with a tray of bandages, and there was a smell of ether and iodoform pervading the precincts that, far from sickening Nan, fairly intoxicated her.

"Oh, I would give a dollar to be in there,"

she said to herself. Just then she caught sight of one of the younger undergraduate nurses.

"How many nurses can go into the operating-room?" asked Nan, eagerly.

"That depends. Sometimes four or five."

"Do you have work to do?"

"Oh, no; sometimes we only look on."

"Do the doctors know you all by name?"

"The house physicians know most of us, except some of the new undergraduates."

"I wish you would change clothes with me, and let me slip in there for just ten minutes," Nan said daringly.

The girl looked amazed, but, knowing Nan to be somewhat privileged as Mrs. Prince's protégée, and being in the habit of acting quickly, she said, —

"Come in here, then, and be quick. The ambulance surgeon is a new one, and the attendant outside doctor won't know; but Miss Deering will."

"She 's all right," said Nan, dropping into the slang she could hardly help learning from the boys.

The change of costume was rapidly made, though it took some seconds to twist Nan's heavy braids under the nurse's cap ; but when the masquerading was arranged, Nan stole a peep into the glass to see herself transformed.

"How pretty you look!" escaped from the nurse, involuntarily.

"I wish I did n't," said Nan, candidly, feeling that perhaps being pretty was going to be an obstacle to the success of her chosen career.

She slipped into the operating-room in the train of several nurses, and the door closed behind her.

What Nan saw in the awful depths of that mysterious operating-room she did not reveal, but she went out a sadder and wiser girl than she went in. If she decided to take up the study of medicine or nursing,

she would surely do so with her eyes opened to some of its horrors. She did not at once make known her intentions even to Mrs. Prince or Lewis, or betray them in her letters to her mother and father. She was not quite sure that Mrs. Prince, in spite of her broad philanthropy, might not consider such a step too radical, and Lewis was perhaps the very last person to whom she would confide her choice of a career.

Lewis was just then at a period of existence — reached at an earlier age, by reason of his environments, than comes to most rich boys — when the local blots out the universal. He thought a great deal about what "the fellows of his set considered the thing," and the fellows took their tone from their older sisters.

If Lewis had not loved Nan more, he would have admired her less for choosing to go to the Pratt rather than one of the more fashionable private schools which she

might have attended. As it was, there were times when he could not quite forgive her for that, and Nan knew him too well to abuse the laws of hospitality by creating any further breach by any more open independence, even though her future might be far beyond the home which now shaped her young life so luxuriously.

There seemed, however, to be plenty of time, she reflected, though the possibility of changing her mind did not occur to her, and she brought a more pertinent interest to her study of anatomy and chemistry. Chance, however, threw her in the way of choosing another confidant, when, going into the hospital one Saturday afternoon a fortnight after her stolen experience, she encountered Marshall Whittemore.

"Why, Nan, you here?"

"Marsh, where did you come from?" Nan answered first. "I am going to see a friend in the Prince Ward. I come

every Saturday. I thought you were in Princeton."

"Well, I am or was," said Marshall, his large mouth expansively smiling. "I am just down for the Sunday; but I was going through the hospital with a friend of mine, one of the internes. I am thinking of studying medicine, and he tells me I am wasting time and money by spending three years at college first. He wants to try my nerve by taking me into the amphitheatre. Here he is now. — Be there in a minute, Doc. — Tell me, Nan, may I walk home with you? What time will you be out?"

"Half-past four," said Nan, blushing to the roots of her hair, as she recognized in Marshall's friend the ambulance surgeon of that luckless Saturday. Marshall, seeing the blush, attributed it, with Nan's stylish appearance, to a change towards the young-lady period. His friend, however, recognized Nan too well. He had looked in vain

among the nurses for the girl with the splendid figure and golden braids, and turned now to Marshall for an explanation.

"Who is that stunning girl, Marsh?" asked the young doctor.

"That is Miss Anna Ratcliffe," said Marshall a little stiffly, for he had the chivalrous feeling which all the camp boys had for Nan, aside from a personal fondness, and disliked to have her stared at in public places.

"From Camp Chicopee?" asked the young doctor, who was not to be snubbed too easily.

"Mr. Ratcliffe's daughter, yes," Marsh answered, still more curtly.

"She is studying to be a trained nurse?" continued Dr. Arnold, half affirmatively and half interrogatively.

"The dickens! That is a joke. Studying to be a trained nurse! Arnold, where did you get that notion? She is spending

the winter at Mrs. Reginald Prince's, and goes to the Pratt Institute. She is only sixteen. A trained nurse, — that is a joke!"

"What will you wager she is n't?"

"I won't bet, but I 'd like you to prove she is."

"Why, certainly. At least four fellows and as many nurses must have seen her in the operating-room two weeks ago, when I brought in that trolley-car chap who had to lose his arm."

"You 'll swear to that, did you say, and half a dozen other fellows? I can't tell you you lie, but I 'll hear her first."

Arnold changed the subject, but Marshall was in no mood to appreciate the lecture in the amphitheatre, and looked at his watch so frequently that the young surgeon rallied him, —

"Remember, Marsh, you are to give me the benefit of the doubt. Your fair friend may not own up, but she was there."

"If she was there, she'll not lie out of it. She could sit through an autopsy easier than tell a lie; that's Nan Ratcliffe!"

Nevertheless Marshall was not so confident as he would have his friend believe, when he met Nan at half-past four at the outside door of the hospital, for Nan herself had a self-conscious, almost guilty look which was not at all like her usually frank manner, that filled Marshall with apprehension; but he went straight to the point, —

"I say, Nan, are you studying to be a trained nurse?"

Nan laughed and answered evasively, —

"And what if I were? Would you think I had taken leave of my senses, or turned my back on my '*social* position,' as Lewis says?"

"I should n't think either, but that you were too young for anything so stiff. Are you really now, Nan?"

"Well, no, I am not, just now. But I think I may when I finish my course at the

Pratt Institute. I shall be seventeen and a half then, you see."

"Then he did lie," cried Marshall, excitedly, to Nan's amazement, darting back towards the hospital, where he proposed immediately to set his friend right; but Nan, grasping the situation, exclaimed, —

"No, he did n't, Marshall, if you mean that Dr. Arnold saw me in the operating-room. I was there. What possessed me to do it, I don't know, — something more than idle curiosity, I think. I had been talking to Miss Deering, the head nurse, about my studying to be a trained nurse, and a wild impulse to test my nerves came over me. When I saw the chance to slip into the operating-room, I did it. I fairly bullied one of the undergraduate nurses into letting me take her uniform."

"Whew!" said Marshall, "you did have nerve. How did you like it? I guess your zeal for surgery cooled, did n't it?"

"No, it did n't a bit. It would have six weeks ago, but you see they gave us a little experience with the knife at school, and I have had a good dose of bones and arteries this term."

"You are a trump, Nan. But what 'll I tell Arnold?"

"Tell him the truth, but ask him to keep it a secret. I could n't stand disgrace before the faculty, and I 'd rather Mrs. Prince and Lewis did n't know just yet. Are you really going to study medicine, Marshall?"

"Yes, I think so. I always intended to after I finished college, and my father is feeling the hard times so much that I am thinking seriously of cutting my college course and going right at the bones. Of course I won't be so cultivated as a man, and I shall miss lots of good times, for I have got into a good set at college on account of being fairly athletic. But a fellow has to grind like anything to be a doctor; then

he has to serve a couple of years in the hospital before he can practise, so that I shall be twenty-four before I shall be off my father's hands, and I would be twenty-seven if I waited to take my degree at Princeton. Why do you go in for nursing?"

"For the same reason, — to take myself off my father's hands. There 's Robbie to be educated. Girls have a right to their independence nowadays as well as boys," said Nan, proudly.

"Well, I guess you will win in that race too, Nan. Anyway, I think you have pluck enough to be anything you want to be. Here we are at Mrs. Prince's."

"You must come in and see Lewis, Marshall, and Mrs. Prince will be very glad to see you; but not a word about the nursing, that 's my secret as yet," said Nan, as they were admitted.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHICOPEE COACH AT THE GREAT GAME.

"THANKSGIVING! Hi! Ki! Yah! Rah! Rah!"

These were some of the cries, accompanied by a frightful tooting of horns, that made Nan's holiday morning nap most hideous, as, her eyes following her ears, she saw the fantastic vision of two masked faces at her bedside. Most preposterous as to noses and rotund as to cheeks, the legs alone betrayed the early visitors as Wolcott and Harry, who thus initiated Nan into the early ceremonies of Thanksgiving day in New York State. Nan's previous impressions of that feast day of the pilgrim fathers were entirely associated with the national bird and pumpkin-pies. The tooting of horns

and adornment of false faces was confined to Fourth of July pageants in her memory; but Wolcott gleefully enlightened her on New York customs, begging her to get up at once that she might lose none of this part of the fun.

"Lewis won't any more, he 's too grown up; but you will, won't you, Nan? Come down and see the ragamuffins with masks at the area door. Cook always gives them goodies on Thanksgiving; mamma tells her to."

So Nan, who could never refuse Wolcott anything, though very much inclined to take half an hour more sleep in celebration of the holiday, and as a terrific blowing of horns seemed to put an end to peace, soon joined the little boys at the lower door, where she found nearly a dozen children in fantastic dress, — old skirts and bonnets, even hoop-skirts and sun-bonnets, — with faces covered by every kind of carnival mask, — donkeys'

heads and darkies' faces, clowns and cherubs, — disguising them very effectually.

The cook, who entered into the spirit of it, was distributing generous pieces of cake and big red apples; thus increasing rather than dispersing the crowd, and delaying her preparations for breakfast.

All at once Giovanni appeared, broom in hand, ready for his morning work of sweeping off the sidewalk; and it was no part of his programme to sweep up crumbs for beggars. He had no Thanksgiving spirit in his heart, and, taking one young reveller by the trail of a calico skirt, another by the back of a sun-bonnet, he pitched them unceremoniously into the street, while the others in terror of the Italian's tongue and hand fled precipitately. When Wolcott and Harry rushed out upon them with their carnival masks, gavotting about him in glee, he only smiled suavely, and touched his hat to Nan, as he began his sweeping with the speed of

a trolley-car. Giovanni, like Nan, had something in mind on this Thanksgiving day that if made into a charade would have read like this, —

"My first is in color like the bumble-bee,
That flits from flower to flower;
My second's like a Noah's ark that rides upon the sea;
My whole, if full, a mascot bears,
Good luck my first to dower."

But Giovanni did n't know anything about charades, and he only knew that up in Mrs. Prince's house was a remarkable dress which he had been bribed by Master Lewis to wear, while Nan was thinking of her orange and black waist, and her new black cape with its orange lining; and the answer to the whole was not far to find, for nobody, not even the little boys, had anything in mind but the Chicopee coach for the Princeton game, which was to start at ten o'clock from Mrs. Prince's and to join the gala-day procession in Madison Square at eleven.

"Giovanni looks like a tiger, does n't he, Nan?" said Lewis, appearing, and making an odd grimace over the prospective vision of Giovanni in the tiger costume prepared for him.

"I was awfully afraid mother would put a stop to it," said Lewis; "but Giovanni has seen the carnival in Italy, and he does n't mind being made a spectacle of, like a Yankee or an Irishman. I took him up to the stables last night, and showed him the coach all trimmed in orange and black, and told him just how he was to stand at the back, and how he could hold on; and he was as pleased as Punch. But won't he look like a Punchinello in that orange and black suit? He admires immensely the silk hat trimmed in orange ribbons. Won't it be just fun?"

"I wonder if he really minds," said Nan.

"Of course he does n't; he thinks it an honor, and it is," Lewis replied. "I guess

lots of fellows would be willing to wear orange and black trousers for the chance of riding on a tally-ho to see that game to-day. You have n't an idea of it, Nan. It is the biggest thing you ever dreamed of; and this year, with Marshall in the rush-line, and Princeton sure to win, why, it 'll be simply immense! Hello, here 's a messenger boy; wonder what 's up! A package — for 'Miss Anna Ratcliffe,' — that 's you, Nan, — a box of flowers."

Nan, who was not used to receiving flowers, broke the string and opened the box to find within a bunch of gorgeous orange chrysanthemums, bearing Marshall Whittemore's card, on which he had written, —

DEAR NAN, — Please wear my flowers to-day, and bring good luck to old Nassua, and your old friend MARSH.

Nan flushed for a moment proudly, and then, pleased as a child, carried them off to show to Mrs. Prince, at the same time saying,

"You must wear one of them, Mrs. Prince, so that we can all wish Marshall good luck."

"Oh, no, dear," Mrs. Prince answered, smiling and kissing the young girl tenderly. "I think you had better wear them all; I have some in the conservatory."

"Marshall might have known we would have plenty in the conservatory, and you girls would of course wear his colors," said Lewis, a little petulantly.

"I think it was very thoughtful of him, when he was so busy," said Nan, unconsciously and without a bit of vanity; "but Jill and Miss Eliot must have some."

"We will get some for them, if they are not already provided," said Mrs. Prince; then laughingly added: "My dear, it would not be fair to Marshall for you to distribute his gift among the other girls. Lewis, pick some of those orange chrysanthemums in the conservatory and send them around to Jill. Don't you think it would be a fair division?"

"All right — if you say so. Van can take them off at once." Lewis disappeared, his pique at Nan's failure to wear their chrysanthemums for the time being consoled, but soon returning.

"How about Miss Eliot, mother?"

"We will decorate her later, if she is not otherwise provided," said Mrs Prince, passing into the breakfast-room with an amused smile on her lips, which had its explanation an hour later, when Margaret appeared wearing a beautiful bunch of orange flowers outside her black coat, and followed by Cousin Harold and Steve.

"We thought we would join you here, Mrs. Prince," said Steve, "instead of in Madison Square; but there will be half a dozen of the boys over there who have come to town for the game. Ernest Lovering and Jamie Hale have come up from Laurenceville, and Howard Crawford and Davy Baker from Hotchkiss. Davy says, though he is go-

ing to Yale, he is going to wear Princeton colors to-day."

"Why, we are all going to do that much for Marsh to-day. The Chicopee coach is nothing if not an Independent. When our Chicopee champion is a Yale fellow, why, we trim our coach in blue; when he is a Harvard chap, why, our flags are crimson. Now, when I'm in Harvard," said Lewis, proudly anticipating his "preliminaries," "I shall expect the Chicopee coach to fly crimson."

"To-day not one of us will dare to show a violet," said Miss Eliot. "It 's the first time I ever turned my colors, but I am sworn to Chicopee to-day."

"And so am I," said Jill, coming with an oriole in her black velvet hat and Lewis's flowers pinned on to her jacket.

"And lest there should be any doubt," said Mrs. Prince, entering with three gorgeous umbrellas striped in orange and black, "I have these Princeton umbrellas as sou-

venirs of the occasion," presenting each girl with one.

"But our flying colors are yet to be seen," said Lewis, leading the party of young people to the back windows which gave a view of the back yard, where Giovanni, arrayed in trousers striped in orange and black, a coat of black, and broad orange necktie with flying ends, and crowned by a silk hat wound with orange ribbons, paraded the flagstones, for the admiration of the maids and Wolcott and Harry.

"That is our tiger," said Lewis.

"Well, I think he is good-natured," said Harold.

"He is an Italian, and loves a carnival," said Mrs. Prince, apologetically.

"I have no doubt he will enjoy the game," said Steve, adjusting his glasses.

Soon the sound of a horn announced the arrival of the coach, and they all rushed eagerly to the front of the house to see the

great tally-ho, beautifully dressed in yellow and black bunting and bearing on either side the ensign, "Camp Chicopee."

Quite a crowd gathered on the sidewalk quickly, as crowds will in cities, and by the time the party were ready to mount, their sidewalk was the centre of observation.

"But we must get used to crowds to-day," said Mrs. Prince, leading the girls out with a gracious smile on her face, like one who is always willing to give pleasure even to a street crowd of unknown boys and girls.

The boys were soon filling the inside of the coach with wraps and umbrellas, and Giovanni was the bearer of a big hamper of luncheon; and as he had been instructed to ride inside until they joined the procession in New York, he soon withdrew his bumble-bee costume from the public gaze, and the girls proceeded to clamber up the ladder to the seats on the top of the coach, — Jill squealing in a way which betrayed that she

had never mounted a tally-ho before; Nan and Harry going hand over hand by the front wheels, in joyful recollection of a jolly drive of the last summer, which, though wonderful in its sights and experiences, could not compare with that which was before them on this Thanksgiving day.

What a contrast the coach itself to the lumbering old stagecoach of the country roads! Strong and firm, yet swaying almost lightly, it bowled over the pavements, differing as much from the turnpike stage as the old sailing-vessels do from the racing-yacht. On they went, following the less frequented streets, till they reached the great bridge where its mighty span makes two monster cities one. The day was hazy, yet beyond against the sky rose the splendid domes and gothic towers of New York's majestic buildings, and in only a few moments they were borne along in the crowds of pressing vehicles in Lower Broadway.

On top of this coach, above the stress and storm of the streets, Nan looked with a new pleasure upon that wonderful vista of Broadway which seems to converge in the lovely tower of Grace Church at Tenth Street; and as that seemed to come nearer, beyond could be seen the white splendor of the Manhattan Building and the graceful form of St. Gaudens's Diana poised on the tower at Madison Square Garden. Nan had seen these before, and the widening beauty of splendid Fifth Avenue beyond; but to-day the whole scene was decked and alive with an array of coaches and bunting, most splendid to behold, — coach after coach gorgeously trimmed, some in blue, some in crimson, many in orange and black, others in the parti-colors of smaller colleges; coaches in twos and fours; coaches on which there were only students, noisy and jubilant as students always are on these days; and coaches brilliant with handsomely dressed ladies, and

pretty girls loaded with flowers, —violets on the Yale coaches, jacqueminot roses on the Harvard, chrysanthemums on the Princeton, — and from all a gay floating of ribbons and flying of flags, while the horns tooted a deafening din.

As the Chicopee coach drew up to a well-known hotel to join the procession, half a dozen boys rushed clamorously towards it, crying the old camp yell, "Hi! Ki! Rah! Rah!" and soon Nan welcomed her summer companions in her comrade way, introducing them to Jill and Miss Eliot as "Our Chicopee Boys;" and soon notes were being compared that brought the very genius of Chicopee to the occasion, and showed to Miss Eliot her very first glimpse of the *little lady of the lake.*

CHAPTER IX.

GIOVANNI AS THE PRINCETON MASCOT.

AS the coaches neared the scene of the great contest, the broad avenue seemed to Nan a tide of humanity moving on like an immense flood. The trains thundering along the elevated railroads overhead added to the din, and with the ever-increasing war-cries of the college boys, punctuated by the shrill toots of bugles, Nan's blood was stirred with excitement. The coach at last rolled up before the gates of the polo grounds. The boys were wild with the spirit of jubilee, and yelled like Comanche Indians as their coach came at last into the grounds. But that was just the thing to do; the more noise the better, was apparently the rule of

the hour. The first glimpse of the scene in the grounds was another incentive for the Chicopee youngsters to outcry their neighbors.

"Oh, Jill!" exclaimed Nan, bouncing up, all enthusiasm, "does n't it look like a picture of the Roman Coliseum, with the people gathered to see a gladiatorial fight! Oh, dear!" she added quickly, with an apprehensive quake, "I hope Marshall won't get hurt."

"Nonsense!" interrupted Lewis, with the air of one who speaks from experience, "the crowd is n't going to play the game."

Nan saw a stretch of turf banked in on every side by swarms of excited men and women, brilliant with college colors. Beyond rose grand stands literally black with humanity. In the distance the masses of people were as swarms of flies. Even the roofs of adjoining houses were black with people; the telegraph poles, even behind

the fence, were resting-places for adventurous urchins and men. People, people, everywhere, and still the crowds surged into the grounds, increasing the roar and the enthusiasm of the moment. The excitement was electrifying. Men, with long ribbons streaming from their hats, waving big flags, would pop up in front of a crowd, flap their arms like roosters, and shout, —

"Now, fellows, nine cheers for Princeton!"

And, banked together, they would shake and shout in unison, —

"Hooray, hooray! Tiger! siss, boom, a–r! Princeton!"

From the other side would come the defiant Yale yell, copied from Harvard's slower cheer, —

"'Rah! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'rah! Y–a–l–e!" with the Yale prolonged.

Then the tune changed. With a fervor

born of conviction, there rose a mighty pæan from the Princeton men, —

"Oh my! Oh my!
How we 'll whip old Eli!"

A derisive reply thundered from the throats of Yale, —

"Yale! Yale! Yale!
How we'll pull the tiger's tail!"

It was now a tremendous vocal battle. A battery of Yale men on a neighboring coach poured out a volley, —

"Brek–ek–ek–ek–ek,
Co–ax–co–ax–co–ax,
Whoa up, whoa up,
Parabaloo,
Yale!"

Princeton turned to music, and all up and down the lines of the orange and black's legions rang the song, —

"Swim out, old Eli!
We 'll whip the men in blue.
Gailey 's in the centre,
And he knows just what to do."

But Yale's clinking battle-cry — "Yale! Yale! Yale!" — like strokes on an anvil, rose clear above Princeton's song, and threw the orange and black into confusion. Then, as if to emphasize Yale's vocal victory, the famous Yale mascot, a diminutive bull-dog, wearing a blanket bearing the legend "Yale always beats Princeton," made his appearance, led by an exuberant youth, arrayed in a sweater and a long ulster, and started across the field straight toward Princeton's sacred precincts. This provoked a torrent of cheers from Yale and howls from Princeton. Now, Giovanni, who had taken his position as footman when the coach joined the procession, did not have the slightest idea what the noise was all about, but shouted too. He jumped up and down on the coach, frantically waving an immense Princeton flag on which a yellow tiger was painted, and screaming at the top of his powerful lungs, "T–i–g–a–r–e! T–i–g–a–r–e!"

Beside the Chicopee coach, just inside the line, lay a group of favored Princeton boys, coaches, and substitutes. They heard Giovanni's frantic shouts, and when they saw this grotesque figure, they held a quick consultation resulting in a new attack on the enemy. Jumping to their feet, they shouted to Giovanni, "Come down here, Tigare, we want you," shaking some tempting greenbacks before him. In an instant the Italian took a flying leap over the heads of the crowd near the coach, and landed on his feet among the grinning conspirators.

"Say, Tigare," said one young fellow in a Princeton jersey, "you must be the tiger's mascot. Come on!" at the same time shoving some bankbills into Giovanni's willing fingers. Then a procession was started up Princeton's line, with Giovanni proudly leading, jumping with fiery enthusiasm, at every step shrieking at the top of his voice, "Tigare! Tigare! Tigare!"

THE LITTLE DOG BROKE AWAY FROM HIS MASTER.

Behind him came the Princeton's coaches and "subs," yelling in unison, —

"Here 's the mascot Princeton 's got;
He 's better luck than Yale's little pup."

Cheers mingled with shouts of laughter greeted this diversion. But a few seconds later pandemonium reigned. Giovanni seized the idea that he and the Yale dog represented opposing elements, and suddenly his excited mind conceived a daring and unique project. Without a word of warning he seized an immense brass horn from one of his escorts, and charged at the dog. The youngster leading the dog was at that moment blowing a horn, and did not have his wits about him. At the sight of this extraordinary figure making hostile demonstrations and emitting unearthly yells, the little dog broke away from his master, and with a howl of anguish put his tail between his legs and ran for dear life, with Giovanni after him. On the Princeton side of the

field Bedlam was let loose. The terrified dog darted on and disappeared among the Yale boys on the other side of the field. Then Giovanni stopped, and, taking the big horn, blew defiant blasts, waving his banner like a flag-bearer after a successful battle. When he came running back to Princeton's side of the field, he received an ovation which would have made "John the Orange Man" of Harvard envious. Money was showered upon him, and as, wreathed in smiles, Giovanni climbed up on the coach again, he panted to Nan, "Mascot now; 'nuff money to buy fruit-store."

All this happened much more quickly than it could be told, and was only a preparation for the outbreak of an almost deafening din which presently began with the appearance of a procession of fine-looking typical American college athletes, of sturdy build and yet lithe and graceful movements, all wearing the Yale uniform. "There are the

Yales," shouted Lewis; "but, great Scott! they are n't as big as the Princetons. Just look, Nan!"

Sure enough, from the corner nearest the Chicopee coach came another procession of larger, more compactly built, and more powerful young men wearing the Princeton jersey. As the two elevens trotted down the field to their respective places, amidst a tornado of shouts, Lewis shrieked to the Chicopee people: "We 've got 'em. Princeton has the brawn."

But Nan was looking at Marshall as he walked with firmness and confidence, his head well up, among his companions.

"Marsh is n't afraid of losing. He goes in to win," she said, pointing out to Jill Chicopee's champion.

The players quickly placed themselves in position and began a little preliminary practice, while the captains and two men in comfortable ulsters consulted in the middle

of the field. Some one tossed up a coin, and then a hurricane of cheers burst from fifty thousand throats, while waving banners and hats along the lines created a whirlwind. The young gladiators quickly took their places, and crouched in readiness for the play to begin. A handsome, smiling Princeton man came up the field from his position back of the line, surveyed the oval-shaped ball a moment, and gave it a resounding thwack with his foot which sent it flying far down the field. Then it seemed to Nan as if all the enthusiasm bottled in the mighty multitude were let out. The very earth seemed to shake; the great game had begun. For a moment the girl's heart stood still, but the unnatural clamor no longer impressed her. The excitement was so contagious that it buoyed her up, and before she knew it she was screaming encouragement and advice to Marshall, her voice being but an atom, lost in this tremendous cataclysm of sound.

Yale catches the ball, and back it flies like a shot, propelled by the lithe full-back on the Yale team. For a second Nan's heart stood still with sudden fear. How those Yale rushers tore down the field! They brushed the Princeton boys aside as if they were statues! Ah! who had fumbled the ball? It was on Princeton's goal line, and, ah! miracle of miracles! the famous Princeton kicker sent the ball right against the chest of a young Yale giant, who, clutching it, tore his way through the stupefied tigers and made a touchdown for Yale. And all this agony, excitement, and disappointment in only five minutes. Then happened some of the most singular things Nan ever saw. Yale men seemed to go crazy with delight. A mighty roar of joy came from their side of the field, and the few groups of Yale men on Nan's side of the grounds hugged one another and danced for joy.

Just then Yale kicked a neat goal from the touchdown, and the happy Yale crowd burst into a chorus, —

"Line up, rushers, line up with a will!
We have always beaten Princeton, and we always will."

Nan felt very sad; she thought Princeton was surely beaten, and to her great delight she heard Lewis say to her in his hearty, confident way, —

"It was only a fluke, Nan, and can't happen again. The ground is wet, and Princeton will have to drop kicking and try rushing. Oh, we 'll win yet. Just see how the boys line up! See that bull-headed fellow standing back ready to run! They call him Keeley, the perpetual-motion man, because he never tires out. My! see him go bang through the Yale line. Ah! they can't hold him, they can't."

As if inspired, the Princeton army began to sing like a battle song, —

"Right thro' the centre,
Now round the ends,
Shove 'em thro', striped tigers of Princeton;
Shove 'em thro', shove 'em thro',
Shove 'em thro'."

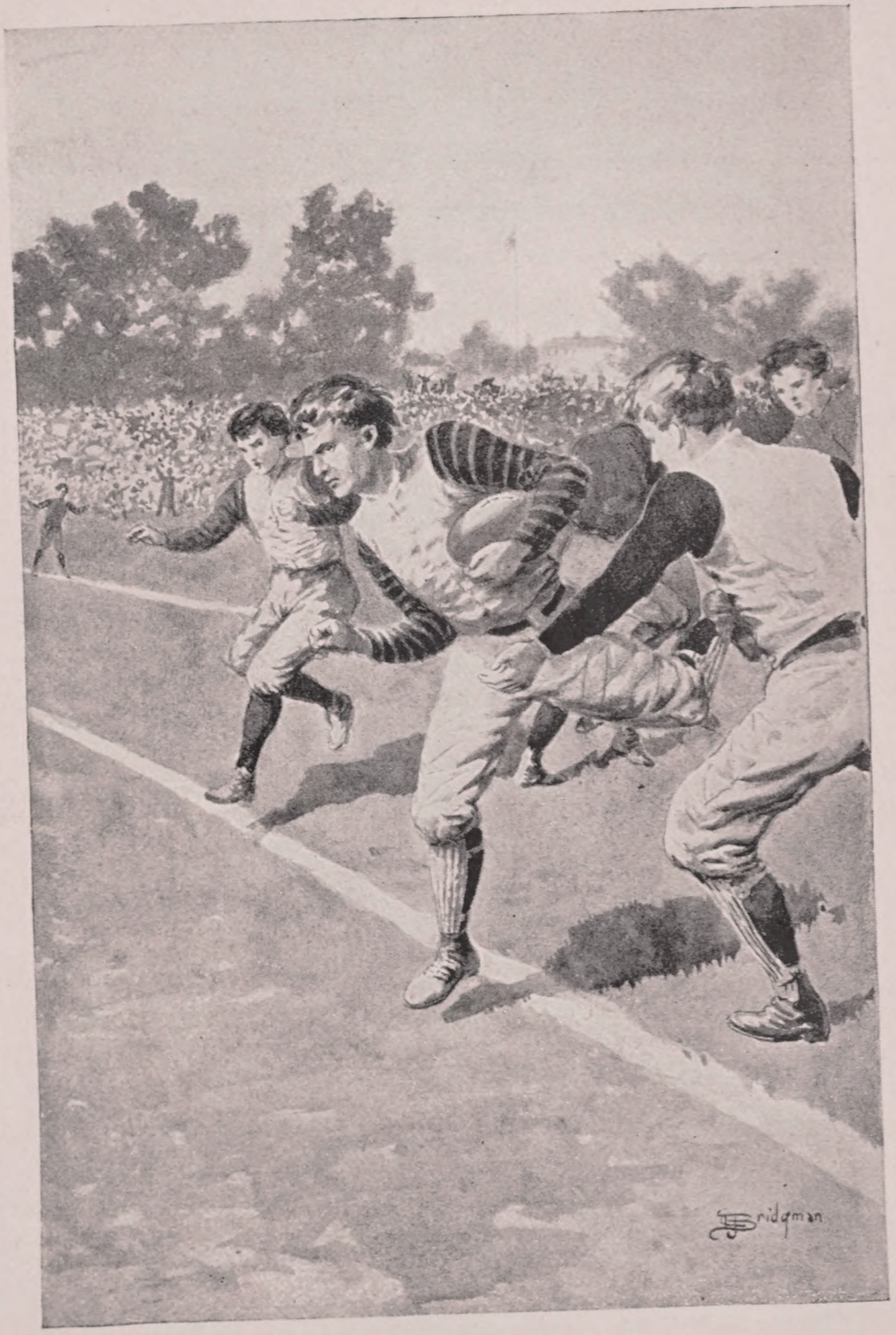
The effect was inspiring. The Princeton tigers threw themselves like human catapults against the defenders of the blue, and tore apart their opponent's line as if they were playing with children. The Princeton tiger was aroused, and the life and vigor of this new play fairly confounded the Yale boys at first. Now the tireless Keeley, now his mate battered through the Yale line, carrying the ball farther up the field each time. But the Yale men, gathering themselves together with characteristic pluck, made a determined effort to withstand Princeton's onslaught. The two lines at this juncture suggested two men grappling with each other, swaying backward and forward.

While Princeton's advance was being momentarily stayed, Nan caught up her opera-

glasses and looked at Marshall. With his face set like iron, half crouching, his sinewy arms swaying in front, with his hair standing out in a bushy mass, Marshall, in his striped uniform, looked like a young tiger ready to spring. Nan saw him warily turn. The wiry Princeton quarter-back made a quick movement, and then all was a tangle of writhing bodies and wriggling legs. Suddenly out of the squirming mass Marshall emerged with the jaunty Princeton captain close at his elbow.

"Marsh has the ball!" shouted Lewis, fairly wild with excitement. "See him come; see how the tigers guard him! Come on, Marsh! Come on, old boy, come on, old Marsh!"

With his head erect, the precious ball under his left arm, and his right left free to fend off his opponents, Marshall circled around a Yale half-back, and started down the field at a tremendous burst of speed.



MARSHALL'S RUN.

On he flashed down the Princeton side of the field with the fury of a battle-charger. A glimpse of his face stamped with fierce determination thrilled Nan. On he came, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty yards, before the Yale full-back and the half-back near him could close up on him. The sons of old Nassua almost stampeded with excitement, as Marshall swept by them towards the Yale goal; and when he was finally stopped, their joy knew no bounds. Marshall had carried the ball to within five yards of Yale's line. A touchdown for Princeton was inevitable, and Marshall was the hero of the moment. Then the big fellows, puffing and steaming, lined up. There was a sudden heave of the Princeton men, followed by a pyramid of twisting bodies, with the referee and umpire darting here and there to see who had the ball and where it was. As the heap of players gradually unwound itself, Princeton players began to jump in the air, shouting,

"Touchdown, touchdown for Princeton," and then the joy of the orange and black was unrestrained. Presently a goal was kicked, and the score was tied — 6 to 6.

"Now, Nan," said Lewis, "see if I was n't right about the fluke."

And Lewis was right. The rest of the game remained with Nan as a jumbled series of pictures, of the Princeton tigers battering the demoralized but always plucky Yale boys down the field; of Princeton men plunging through the Yale line here, and tearing through there, making touchdown after touchdown until the game ended. Then came the crowning scene. The Princeton legions flooded the field, bearing the champions and their orange banner away in victory.

In all the tumult Marshall did not forget one figure, of whom he had caught glimpses now and then, standing on the Chicopee coach. As he was borne in tri-

umph past Nan, he waved his hand to her, who was envied by more than one girl on the coaches near by. Then the Chicopee party wild with enthusiasm, drove home, all talking of the great game, and thinking of nothing else for days to come, regretting, in the dinner which followed at Mrs. Prince's, that Marshall was conspicuously absent, held, as he was, by the victorious eleven to join in its jubilee.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. PRINCE INVITES GUESTS TO A CHRISTMAS PARTY.

"MAMMA smiles all the time nowadays," said Wolcott, confidentially, to Harry one morning early in December.

"Why, Christmas is coming," said Harry, with the wise look of the eleven-year-old boy who has discovered the Santa Claus myth to lie in the generous heart of a loving mamma. "Of course she is making plans for the holidays."

"I know what I want," said Wolcott, mysteriously.

"I know what I want, too; I 'm making my list out now," said Harry.

"And I know what I want, too," said Nan, coming into the nursery.

"Oh, what do you want, Nan?" asked Harry, anxious to make a minute of Nan's slightest wish, for use when the great time came to buy presents. And taking his bank from the mantelpiece, to shake its sounding richness proudly, "I think I must have 'most five dollars," he added, sure that Nan would not wish for anything that should cost a tenth of that precious sum.

"Oh, you can't buy my wish, dear; it is worth its weight in gold."

"Oh, tell us what it is, Nan, do!" begged Wolcott, eager to be the little bird to carry Nan's wish to his mother's ear.

"I would like a Christmas party at Chicopee," said Nan, her eyes dancing.

"A Christmas party at Chicopee! Oh, Nan, that is n't any present," cried both boys, in a disappointed tone.

"I told you it could n't be bought, but it 's the only wish I have, just the same."

"Oh, Lewis," called Harry, hearing his

older brother coming down from his studio, in the third story, "do you know what Nan wants for a Christmas present?"

"No; what is it?" said Lewis, counting over in his mind the amount he would have left from his allowance to expend on Christmas presents.

"A Christmas party at Chicopee," shouted both boys.

"Well, that would be a Christmas present, Nan! Let's have one; I don't see why not. I'm sure mamma would be willing if your mother wanted the bother," said Lewis, already learning the power of wealth.

"Why, Lewis, I was only dreaming; of course it is n't possible. Don't say a word to your mother."

"Possible?" said Lewis; "why, it's the easiest thing in the world! Don't see why not, if your father is willing to have the bother of us all. It would be the greatest lark!"

And in five minutes Lewis had laid Nan's Christmas wish in his mother's hands, with his confident air.

"Nan wants her Christmas present to be a Christmas party at Chicopee, mamma, but she thinks it impossible. Now, would n't it be a lark for us all to go up, if Mrs. Ratcliffe were willing? We could see what the lake is like in winter."

Nan had refused to join in Lewis's request, and had fled to her room, frightened by the audacity of her cherished scheme; but she was not allowed to remain there long, for soon Lewis and the boys were all calling for her.

"Nan, oh, Nan, mamma says she had thought of it herself. Think of that! Oh, mamma always thinks of everything." And then Nan was pulled into Mrs. Prince's room, where Nan's radiant face told how much the plan meant to her.

"Would you like it, dear, very much?

Of course I knew you would want to go home for the holidays, and I have been thinking how much we should miss our girlie, and it did occur to me that unless you preferred to go home and be at home alone, it would be a very jolly way to spend the holidays, to go to the camp, if your papa is willing to open it for us. It is seldom very cold in December, but there is plenty of ice on the lake to give the boys a taste of the winter sports."

"Oh, such sport!" said Nan. "You can't imagine the fun. Oh, boys! you will have the best Christmas holiday you ever knew."

From that day such excitement prevailed, it seemed as though the town house were hardly large enough to contain the happiness.

Mrs. Prince's mornings were spent in writing important letters and telegrams, and her afternoons in receiving answers. Then such preparations for cold days and nights, wet weather and windy weather. There

were leggings and heavy stockings by the half dozens; sweaters and leather jackets, overshoes and moccasins, fur robes and heavy blankets.

"I should think we were going to the Arctic regions, mamma, and you were fitting out Peary's expedition," said Lewis.

"You boys have no idea of the requirements for a good time in the New Hampshire forests, and I mean that you shall be dressed to fear no element."

"But what do we want of moccasins, and overshoes too?" said Lewis, making an inventory of the articles spread about his mother's room, when the outfit was nearly ready.

"Why, for snow-shoeing, of course," said Nan. You can't snow-shoe in overshoes."

"Oh, supposing there should n't be any snow, then our whole plan would be spoiled," said Lewis.

"No, indeed, it would n't, for papa wrote

yesterday that the ice was sixteen inches thick, and that he had had a toboggan slide made," said Nan, glowing with anticipation of going home and the added pleasure of showing her friends what Chicopee could give them in winter.

Mrs. Prince had so many secrets of her own that her eyes shone all the time and her mouth was wreathed in smiles, and both Nan and Lewis found it hard to imagine what further delights the "fairy godmother" could have in store for them, beyond what seemed a more than full programme of winter sports; but when at last on the twentieth the express-cart carried the equipment for their winter holiday, Lewis said,—

"Why, mamma, you 've taken things enough for a dozen persons, — canned vegetables, and soups, and fruit, and pillows and blankets. And why is Polly going? And here comes a carriage with Jill and Miss

Eliot! There, mamma, you have given Nan a surprise party."

There was Jill, with a long ulster on, and a fur cap pulled over her ears, and fur gloves in her lap, and Miss Eliot, wearing a big fur cape and a tight little turban, and both carrying shawl-straps and bags.

"All aboard for Chicopee!" cried the little boys, swinging up their new red toboggan caps with greatest glee, while Nan stood dumb with astonishment till Jill said, —

"Why, Nan, don't you want me to go?" which brought Nan quite to her senses, and she flew at Jill, and hugged her almost to death, crying, —

"It 's the best of all; but why did n't you tell me?"

"That was Mrs. Prince's secret, and there is more of it yet," Jill whispered.

And indeed there was, for when they reached the great Grand Central Station, there were Harold and Steve and Marshall

and Ernest Lovering and Jimmie Hale, arrayed like Esquimaux.

With one accord the boys rushed up to Nan, exclaiming in one voice, —

"Thank you so much for your invitation to the Christmas party, Nan."

"My invitation?" Nan answered, looking from one to the other. "Why, I did n't know anything about it. It 's Mrs. Prince's surprise party."

Then such jolly laughter as ran through the group, stopped babies crying, rested tired travelling mothers, and pleased even the crotchety old gentleman whose "grip" was marked with labels from every port in the world.

That fur-wrapped group was the centre of attraction in the crowded waiting-room for the next fifteen minutes, while Marshall and Harold looked after luggage and tickets, counted checks, secured seats in the "White Mountain Express," and smoothed

the path for Nan's surprise party in a way that showed they had made the journey many times before. Mrs. Prince, who never fumed or fretted, sat quietly in a comfortable corner, waiting until the young men should announce all the arrangements complete. It was Mrs. Prince's way never to be disturbed by any trifles. "But if we should lose the train, mamma," Lewis would say. "Why, we could take another," she would reply.

But with Harold to attend to luggage and Marshall to buy tickets, there was no reason for any one to become anxious, and when the train rolled out of the great station, the merry band were all aboard.

To the little boys there was no part of the journey more interesting than the passage under the great tunnels that bisect the city avenues; but Mrs. Prince watched for the broad, beautiful Hudson, with its wall of Palisades just touched by snow beyond.

"To think we shall be at Chicopee to-night!" said Nan to Jill, as the two girls looked out of one window, — Nan eager to see the brick buildings vanish and to follow the shore of the Hudson for many hours; Jill wondering what Nan's world was like.

"Papa lived in Canada when he was a boy, you know, Nan, and I have always longed to go to the ice carnival at Montreal."

"It won't be like that, Jill, but you can't help liking it."

Then, as the journey progressed, and the young men had each chatted in turn with Mrs. Prince, and she herself seemed willing to be left alone, Harold slipped into a seat by Miss Eliot, and Lewis and Jill began to compare sketches and caricatures, while Marshall seemed happy to find that the younger boys had at last betaken themselves to the end of the car, and left Nan free to respond to his friendly confidences.

The train sped on its way, with the cling-

clang of the ponderous wheels singing a different song to every heart, but to Nan only the one joyous cry of "Homeward Bound," till Catskills and Hildebrands had melted into sky lines to the west, and the Berkshires had smiled benignly above gracious valleys, and then, as the day closed, they came at last to that quiet, peaceful Connecticut which Nan loved. Then the car seemed hardly to be able to contain the girl's spirit, as she sprang from side to side, pointing out to Jill first one familiar view and then another, Kearsarge and Mt. Washington on the far horizon, and the crystal gleams of New Hampshire's lovely lakes.

The little boys were almost as wild in their glee as Nan herself, although to them there was something strange in the stretch of country, powdered with the soft wool of the first snow-storms. It was a little hard for them to find the boundaries of their play-grounds, "with ruffles on the fences," as Wolcott said.

But it was long after dark when at last the train whistled its "hallo" to the waiting friends at Chicopee village, and little Robbie and Paul had each caught many a nap in the vain endeavor to keep awake till half-past eight.

Dear Mrs. Ratcliffe, driven by her housewifely instincts from one corner of the rambling old farmhouse to the other, yet held by her motherly love to steal a look every now and then into Nan's room, had exhausted all her fertility of resource in making the house attractive to the visitors, in spite of Mr. Ratcliffe's protestations.

In each of the four great chambers the andirons were bright, big logs were burning, and candlesticks were polished to their utmost. She said, half to herself, half to her spouse, who waited the railroad signal: "Of course the boys can't go to camp to-night, and I shall have to use some of the feather-beds. Mrs. Prince and Wolcott are to

have the south chamber, Miss Eliot the west room, Steve and Marshall the sitting-room chamber, Jill and Nan the Nest, bless the girlee! and then Lewis and Harry in Marian's room. The Count is so good as to share his room with Hal, and Robbie and Paul are in Rob's room. Everything is quite comfortable, and how lucky that Jonas's wife could come to help in the kitchen, and Sallie Rhodes is so neat in the dining-room. There is the train, whistling down at the crossing."

But the little mother was talking only to empty air, for Mr. Ratcliffe and the Count had been gone two minutes on their way with wagon and carryall, to bring home the precious load; and in fifteen minutes more, shouts of boys and laughter of girls, and the soft, caressing voice of dear Mrs. Prince were heard in the great square hall, which always before had seemed so vast, and yet now seemed as full as it could be with all this gay company.

Nan said not a word for a moment, as she clung to the little mother, with Robbie pulling her sleeve and Paul stroking her hand; and then she must lead Jill to her Nest, and show Miss Eliot the great dining-room with its huge brick chimney-piece, and the antlered heads of deer and caribou, the cabinet of bird's eggs, her case of birds, and the mammoth hornet's nest, — trophies of many a summer's pilgrimage.

"Oh, can't she see the new bunnies?" said Robbie.

"Oh, it's too late to go into the barn to-night, Robbie," said his father; "and besides, they are as hungry as hunters, and supper is ready."

"There is another day coming, and —"

"And another and another and another," said Nan, as she placed Jill beside her at the table and squeezed her hand ecstatically under the cloth, while Lewis on Jill's other side said, —

"You 've only begun with the fun. Wait till the ice-boat 's out, and you get on your skates."

"But you 've never been up here in winter before yourself," said Jill.

"Oh, I know it, but I 've seen it all through Nan's eyes;" and on the other side of Nan, Marshall was silently busy passing dishes.

"Yes, thanks, Marshall. Help yourself. This is my jelly; I put it up just before I went away."

"Did you really, Nan?" said Marshall.

"Of course I did. Did n't you know I could put up preserves?"

"I did n't know you cared anything about such things."

"Why, Marsh, do you think I don't help mother a bit? I 'm not such a pig. I like cooking, but I despise sewing."

"Such partridges!" said Steve. "Are we in time for the shooting?"

"Just a week before close time; you can make the most of it, boys," said Mr. Ratcliffe to the young men; but Harold said, —

"We've come up to give the young ladies a good time, you know."

"Oh, Nan, is quite able to take care of the girls on the toboggan-slide, on snow-shoes or skates, Harold, and you can get a chance at a few brace of partridge," said Mr. Ratcliffe, with a merry look of mischief across the table at Mrs. Prince.

With plans for the morrow, the evening slipped away, and it was nearly eleven o'clock when Mrs. Ratcliffe gave the girls their candles, saying, "You must remember your dreams, my dears, this first night. That is an old-fashioned superstition. I can remember the first time I slept in this old house, just after I was married. I can't remember my dream, but I know I was very happy, and I hope you will all be."

Mrs. Prince followed the girls up, and the

white dimity-hung chamber was so comfortable and cosey, Wolcott's baby curls were so fair, and his face so round on the pillows, she knew that her dreams would be for the future of her boys.

Margaret, in the chintz room that looked to the west, had, perhaps, some dreams of her own which she still could not reveal to the mad-cap girls, who left her at the threshold.

Nan and Jill had no thought of dreams, but would have talked till morning, had not a warning knock from her mother stilled them to dreamless sleep at midnight.

CHAPTER XI.

NAN AND MARSHALL DISCOVER A ROMANCE.

"LET us go up to the mountain gully, Nan, where we used to walk when you were a little girl," said Marshall, when they had been but a few days at the farm, and Lewis had taken his Kodak to the barn-yard to take some snap-shots at the pets and little boys in their picturesque winter costumes. The Count had invited Jill and Miss Eliot to visit his Hermitage, the round tower on the hill, where he spent his summers, and which held more than one souvenir of Russia.

No programme had been arranged for this special afternoon, and Steve and the others were all in camp, leaving Marshall free to obtain Nan's companionship if he could, for

Marshall had found in the pleasant intercourse of the farm-house a happy reminiscence of the summer days when he had first come to Chicopee, before Mr. Ratcliffe had planned the camp and introduced an alien element into the friendship of himself and Nan.

He was then a rather awkward, slim boy of twelve, and Nan a robust girl, not quite ten; and how delightful had been their plays and strolls through woods and dells, by brooks and lake, in search of treasures rich and rare to the city boy! What wonders they had discovered, what treasures brought home, of moss and fungus, sticks and stones, dear only to themselves!

He had played so condescendingly all kinds of games that were not quite boyish, to please his little playmate, yet to his own amusement, acting out Nan's queer fancies, for days at a time, when he would be an enchanted Prince, or Hamlet's ghost,

or Sinbad the sailor, or Ali Baba; and then she would reward him by playing baseball, or marbles, or hocky, or pitch-knives, until Mrs. Ratcliffe would say that Nan was a boy one day and Marshall a girl the next.

But those days were long ago, before Lewis came, and Marshall was not sure that Nan would go back to the good old days, even for one afternoon. Great was his pleasure when she entered joyfully into the plan. If Marshall were conscious that he was six years older, it seemed that Nan was less so. When she came to the top of their first long hill, she exclaimed, —

"Let 's race down here. The black birch over there is the goal. One two, three, slam bang!" and, warned by a recent experience, Marshall dared not give her the "three paces of grace," as he used to, and, flying, she like Atalanta, he as the runner from Marathon, they covered the snow-laid road, Marshall coming in by two paces ahead, Nan hatless

and mittenless, measuring her length at the foot of the tree, both laughing and breathless.

Then Marshall had to go back for the cap and mittens, and dared not say the little gallant speech which was on his lips, for fear of spoiling the fun, till Nan said, —

"Oh, Marsh, don't you hate to grow up? But we are growing up. Now, when we do these things nowadays, it is just as much fun, in a way, as it used to be; but yet there is always something outside of it that makes it different, — the feeling that there is a lot of work for somebody to do. Don't you remember last summer when I could n't make up my mind to go away? It was n't that I was a bit afraid of being homesick, but something made me feel that it would never be the same again. And it won't. Since I have seen all those people down there crowded up together, dirty and hungry, I feel as if they have a right to some of it."

"Oh, Nan, don't spoil it," said Marshall. "Your little bit of a world spread ever so thin would n't give them a bite, and you would only make yourself less happy. It is just because you and I and Hal and Steve have got so much out of all this, that we can help the people we come in touch with, as we may. If we had done things in a half-hearted way, we should n't be able to do so much as we may by and by, when the colony is started. I read somewhere last winter it 's no use looking after the valves, we must just keep on breathing; and just because somebody else has heart disease, that 's no reason why we should n't let our hearts pump the very best blood they can to our veins and brains."

"Oh, Marshall, you moralize like a doctor. When you read things, do you just pick out the special passages marked *arteries* and *valves?* I see now why you are in a hurry to practise."

"I can't wait, Nan; but I've promised my father that I will finish out this year at college, and then go into the medical school. He thinks business is going to be better by and by, and there is n't any real need of my cutting the course, but I am impatient. But, Nan, don't be in too much of a hurry about the nursing, will you?"

"And why not? If you are impatient to get to work, when there is no need of it, how do you suppose I feel with my hands tied?"

"Your hands tied, Nan? Why, you are as free as a bird! You don't know what it is to be bound by anything. Do you think you can get over this wall?"

"Oh, Marshall, what a joke! Can I get over this wall? Since when have I been too infirm to get over a chip wall?" said Nan, indignantly.

"It 's only because your dresses seem to be a little longer than they used to be," said

Marshall, apologetically, as Nan started to climb over the wall, when all at once Nan exclaimed, —

"The plaguy old thing! Mother has made it two inches too long, and I've got it caught in the rock. Can you help me, Marshall? Talk about being bound and tied hand and foot? Nothing ties a girl like this kind of thing, and I was just going to vault over so easily. Oh, Marshall, see that woodpecker!"

Following the direction of Nan's finger, Marshall saw poised on the back of the trunk of a fallen tree a jaunty woodpecker, evidently scratching for the frozen remains of some belated grubs. Going noiselessly to the end of the tree, Nan knowingly peeped beneath to discover that he had made for himself a snug hole on the under side away from the snow and the wind; and to verify it she rapped with her knuckles on the end of the tree, and he disappeared beneath.

"As much as to say," said Nan, "'You bothering creature, you may wait till another spring before I give you a sight of me again.'"

By various cross cuts where Nan wished to explore certain fox-holes and mud-frogs' haunts and other familiar places, they reached only after a long two hours' walk the shadow of the mountain. To the east and northeast the snow-covered plains sloped rapidly to the lake region, and beyond on the far horizon stretched the beautiful mountain ranges of the White Hills, touched by the glorious, reflected light of the sun going down in the west.

"Why, Marshall, the sun is going down and we are two hours from home!" exclaimed Nan, in dismay.

"By the straight road we could make it in an hour and a half, but it is a good deal later than I thought. We ought not to stay a moment; we must walk and run till we get into the high-road, and if we can't

make the turn before dark, we shall have to wait for the moon," said Marshall, looking anxiously at the sinking sun.

"I don't think it will take us more than an hour and a half, but it will be pitch dark long before that. These days are so short. I ought not to have led you so much out of the way," said Nan.

"I ought to have taken better care of you," said Marshall, with an exasperatingly protecting look at Nan, who was striding on out of patience with herself.

"Taken care of me! I guess I can take care of myself; but I ought to have had more sense. Have you got any matches, Marshall?"

"Yes, a match-box full," said Marshall, pulling out a silver box and opening it to assure himself.

"Well, if worse comes to worse, we can build a fire and wait for the moon to rise; but they will be frightened, or rather mamma will and Mrs. Prince."

In spite of their rapid strides, which quickened into a run down hill, darkness covered the landscape long before they reached the turn in the road which led to the village; and although Nan kept on perversely for a time, Marshall persuaded her that they were running a risk of losing their path, and that they would better build a fire and wait for the moon to rise in another hour.

"We 'll strike a match and look for some brush," said Marshall; and, both working briskly, they had burned only half a dozen matches before they had a good heap of brushwood gathered, and there was soon a bright fire crackling beside the road.

"It will keep off unwelcome visitors, and keep us warm if it won't give us something to eat," said Nan, as they tramped up and down on opposite sides of it, like sentinels around a bivouac.

"What a trump you are, Nan! How do

you suppose the little Brinkerhoff would behave at such a time?"

"Oh, Jill would scream a little at first, and then settle down to doing something sensible. Of course she is n't so strong as I am; but she has lots of pluck underneath her squeals. Don't you like Jill, Marsh?"

"I like her well enough; she is n't my kind of a girl, exactly. How did you happen to be such friends?"

"Why, she was so nice to me at school at first, and then she is so quick and clever. Now we are great chums. She is quick-witted and I am sure-footed, so you see we make a pretty good pair. I am sorry you don't like her, though," said Nan, in a disappointed tone.

"I do like her well enough. I don't suppose I've got to like her as well as you do, just because you like her?"

"Of course not; you don't know her so well, and then I don't think you and Jill would ever be chums, as we are. Now,

Lewis and Jill get on splendidly, for they both see the funny side of things and like to sketch and make caricatures, and in spite of her seeming so flippant, she is just as determined, and is going to study art, so as to illustrate books," said Nan, in defence of her friend.

"I know somebody else is determined to do something, — nursing or — "

"Oh, yes, I've made up my mind, too. How do you like Miss Eliot, Marshall?"

"There! you are asking a leading question;" and Marshall, adding a few more sticks to the fire, began to laugh immoderately.

"I don't see what you are laughing at, unless they told you about my falling in love with her."

"Your falling in love with her? Well, that is a joke, Nan. I can't conceive of your falling in love — with a girl."

"Well, I did; but if that is n't it, what are you laughing at?"

"I was thinking of Hal. He is just awfully in love with her. Down at the camp the other night, we had more fun. Hal spouted poetry, and talked such nonsense Steve and I nearly rolled off our chairs, — her eyes and her hair and her voice and her good deeds; why, Saint Lucy, Saint Agatha, Saint Ursula, none of them can hold a candle to Saint Margaret. No wonder her hair is so bright; it's an aureole or halo!" And Marshall threw back his head and laughed till the owls hooted in reply, and Nan stood still, staring at him, then exclaimed, —

"Do you really think they'll be engaged?"

"They'll be engaged if Harold has his way, but girls are queer ducks," Marshall replied.

"Humph!" sniffed Nan; "then we'll have Marian and Herbert all over again. It is very tiresome! Hark! there are sleigh-bells."

"Some one coming to look us up. We'll

put on more head light," said Marshall, and when the sleigh came in sight it was a single sleigh with two occupants, Harold and Miss Eliot.

Hal drew up his horse in some surprise and confusion, calling out, —

"What are you two doing out here so late?"

"Waiting for the moon," said Marshall, while Nan began to laugh immoderately.

"Nan, get in here, and Marshall can hang on behind, and I 'll turn around. Our horse knows the way without a lantern."

"Did n't you come out for us?" asked Nan, who had regained composure.

"Not exactly, though uncle asked me to keep a lookout. Aunt Mary and Mrs. Prince were worried, but your father said, 'Nan always lands on her feet, and Marshall is no fool.' But how did you happen to be so belated?"

"We were tramping over some of our old

playground and did n't notice how far from home we were," said Nan, adding, "Where were you going, if you were n't going to find us?"

"Oh, I was going to show Miss Eliot the mountain by moonlight," said Hal.

Nan gave an incredulous "Ah!" and did not speak another word all the way home, though Miss Eliot talked to Marshall. There were scoldings and kisses when they got home, but Nan was too hungry to care for anything so much as the baked beans and brown bread that had been kept comfortably hot for them.

As Harold and Miss Eliot drove off again, Nan said suggestively to Marshall, —

"The mountain is lovely by moonlight, humph!" and half an hour later, she teased Jill to go to bed, complaining of being too tired to sit up for games or music, as indeed she was; but when both girls sat upon the floor unbuttoning their boots, after the manner of girls, Nan burst forth, —

"Well, Jill, what do you think is going to happen, but that Cousin Hal is falling in love with Margaret Eliot!"

"Indeed, I've known that all the time," answered Miss Jill.

Nan replied, "Why didn't you say so before, then?" throwing one boot into a remote corner with emphasis.

"I didn't think it was just polite when he is your cousin. If she shouldn't like him, it might hurt your feelings," said Jill, insinuatingly.

"I guess if she knew what a splendid fellow Cousin Hal is, she would be glad to marry him. But, oh, dear, I went through so much with Marian, and then she didn't have any bridesmaids."

"I do hope she'll have bridesmaids, and ask us, don't you, Nan?" said Jill, reflectively brushing her curly pate.

"I think it is rather previous, and then you and I wouldn't match well at all. I'm

so big, and you are so little; but then she would be sure to think it nonsense. Working among the poor seems to make girls so unsentimental. I am so sleepy, Jill. Good-night."

But as she was just dozing into a delicious dream, where wedding-cake and baked beans, the moon and a bonfire, played at cross-purposes, Jill woke her up to ask, —

"Shall you call her Meg, or Margaret, or Madge?"

"Oh, dear, I'll call her — and you, too, Jill — a nightmare!

CHAPTER XII.

CAMP CHICOPEE IS TO FOUND A COLONY.

"NO, I 'll steer myself; Jill, you hold Wolcott on; then Lewis and Harry; and I will get on last, and keep you straight."

Nan stood behind the Canadian toboggan, at the top of the steep slide which terminated in the frozen lake itself, and directed the loading of the passengers, in compliance with her own knowledge and experience.

"Oh, oh, I 'm afraid!" screamed Jill, as, viewed from the top, it looked a perilous descent indeed; and her courage waned when, fastened securely in the front of the flat sled, with only Wolcott between her and the precipitous decline, she screamed shrilly, —

"Oh, don't start yet!"

"Now, don't be a goose, Jill! hold on tight, here we go, — one, two, three!" With a whir and a whizz the long Canadian sled shot down the ice-track and off at the bottom on to the lake itself, where it was finally stopped by a snow barricade, which had been thrown up for the purpose.

In a moment all were on their feet, no one shouting louder than Jill, —

"Oh, is n't that fine? Let 's try it again! But let me steer, Nan."

"There is n't much steering to do on the slide, but just the same I would n't risk Wolcott's neck with you or Lewis," said Nan, who could not help showing a little superiority.

"Let 's go down by ourselves, then, Jill," said Lewis, "and we 'll take turns at steering."

"You know what happened to Jack and Jill," said Nan, laughing, as they climbed to the top of the slide again.

"Yes, but it happened once too often. I don't propose to fall down this hill. I'm going down just the way we did with you. Come, Lewis, let's try it," said Jill, pertly.

There was a cheer from the little boys as the two whizzed over the track; but as they reached the bottom, Lewis forgot to steer toward the snow wall, and the toboggan, lightly loaded, slewed round and round like a tee-totum, leaving Lewis rolling over on the ice, and Jill clutching what she called the "dasher," while the end flew up in the air. In a second Lewis was on his feet and extricated Jill from her position; but the youngsters and Nan would not let them escape without ridicule, and Jill refused to go down again that morning; but they all brought out their skates from the bank and challenged one another to a race to the Camp Island.

At skating neither Lewis nor Jill was a novice, for the skating on the pond in their

great city park had been a pastime of several winters, and even Harry and Wolcott could do very well, though Nan gave each a hand, while Lewis skated on with Jill, and it was not long before the wooded island, still green with its firs and hemlocks, was close at hand.

Fires burned on the shore, and smoke came from the pavilion, showing that some of the party had already gathered there; and in response to their halloos Marshall and two other boys came out brandishing axes, to tell of a morning spent in gathering brush and firewood and assisting in the preparation for a camp luncheon, to which Nan also turned her attention, for a horse-sled was seen just leaving the shore, bearing Mrs. Prince, Mrs. Ratcliffe, and Miss Eliot. Hal and Steve had yielded to the temptation of partridge-shooting, and were expected to appear soon with bags full of game.

Sheltered by its evergreens, the little camp seemed to possess a perennial summer charm.

The pine needles beneath the thin snow almost sung a welcome to their tread, and Nan said that even the chipmunks and woodchucks came out of their holes to greet their summer friends.

"We 'll leave them some Christmas presents, as they do the birds in Sweden," said Jill, hopping about from stone to stone, and perching herself on the trunk of a fallen tree, with her old fondness for agile feats. "Oh, it 's the best kind of a picnic I ever heard of. Cold? Why, who could ever think of being cold up here? To be sure, I am rolled in layers of clothing, till I am sure I must look like an Esquimau, but I am as warm as toast."

"Just the same, you 'll be glad to have luncheon inside where there are two open fires going," said Nan, coming out with a kettle of water to set on the cook's fire, without her cap or jacket, yet still aglow from the exercise of skating down.

"How long before luncheon, Nan?" Lewis asked, dreamily making notes for winter sketches.

"Oh, half an hour. The boys and Marsh have got things in fine order, and I am setting the table. My mother and yours are on the way. Why don't you take Jill down to the studio and show her your Den?"

"I think I will. Would you like to see my dark room, Jill?"

So Nan set the little boys to work; and she herself with Marshall's help had done much that Mrs. Ratcliffe expected to do, when that lady arrived.

But Nan said, "Now, mother dear, you and Mrs. Prince are as cold as you can be, and you must sit right by the fire while we unpack the luncheon hamper. I know just how to do it all."

Mrs. Prince confessed to being a little cold, but Miss Eliot's deft hands were ready to help, and before the sportsmen came a

plenteous lunch was ready, with hot coffee and steaming broth.

With bags full of game and hearty appetites, they did justice to the meal. And after that Jill and Miss Eliot had a chance to see some camp drill, as each boy with decorous precision left the table, plate, cup, saucer, knife, and fork in hand, and deposited them in a huge wash-boiler of water, and in an incredibly short time every remnant of the feast was removed; the boys and Nan washing and wiping and replacing the dishes, like soldiers on duty.

Jill laughed contagiously. "It reminds me of the Kitchen Garden. Did you ever see it, Mrs. Prince? Somebody took me there once, — to see the children playing with tables and dishes, being trained to do housework. It was the cunningest thing to see them. At a given signal each one sings a little song and lays a knife and fork in place, then sings another song and puts on

plates and mugs; then takes them off and carries them away to the tune of a march; and then the washing and wiping, all with funny little verses. Did they learn like that? See Wolcott wiping those knives; he never does anything at home."

"Oh, no, that is only Camp Chicopee discipline. Wolcott makes a specialty of knives, but Harry can wipe saucers," said Mrs. Prince, laughing; then, turning to Miss Eliot, she said: "How has that Kitchen Garden work progressed? Do you use it still?"

"Oh, yes, it's part of our kindergarten training; it is so helpful to the children of the poor."

As the work went on, seeming almost play to the boys in the division of labor, Mrs. Prince asked Harold to sit by her while she unfolded a little plan of her own.

"Both of you," she said, beckoning Margaret to a seat on the other side.

"You know I am a person of whims. I suppose if I were poor I should not let them take such possession of me. It was a whim of mine to have Nan in Brooklyn. I think it has been a very satisfactory whim. It was a whim of mine to bring you all up here, to please the child. Now it is a whim of mine to do something else, unless you two wise and steady ones call it Utopian. I want to buy some land up here, perhaps a farm, perhaps an island, and I want to bring some of your poor boys and girls up here next summer, and not give them just the fun, but some of the profits, of the life that has made Nan what she is. Now there must be many of those children in your slums, Harold, that are sent off by the Fresh Air Fund, who would like to stay on through the fall and have good homes, learn to plant and to make hay, to take care of chickens and stock. There would be others for whom two weeks would be enough, — the real children of the

slums, without a wish for anything else! There must be mothers, widows with boys, who would like it; there must be girls who could learn to be neat and handy, to make butter and preserves, who would go back to good city homes as servants later. Now, why can't I buy one of these abandoned farms that we hear of? Why can't I get some help from you girls in the Settlement, and you young men, in finding worthy boys and girls, and then perhaps in finding some of your helpers who would take turns in giving a month in the summer? I should of course get a farmer and his wife to take care of the place. Is it quixotic? Hal, tell me!"

Harold, who had been both startled and astonished by the proposition, almost stammered, —

"Quixotic! No, indeed, my dear Mrs. Prince, but very expensive."

"Expensive, yes, I suppose so; but those are my extravagances. I don't wear diamonds,

I have given up fashionable entertainments. If the expense is the only drawback, let us set about it at once, so that when summer comes we can have the Chicopee Colony going. Come, Harold, say you will help me," pleaded Mrs. Prince, in her not-to-be-denied way, which was almost too convincing to Harold, who had, however, some scruples yet to be overcome.

"I should have to talk it over with uncle."

"Of course. We will take him into our confidence at once; and here he comes," said the lady, turning to Mr. Ratcliffe, who had too much of the temperament of the enthusiast himself to discourage any plan of the kind proposed by Mrs. Prince, however utopian it might appear to other people; and he said, —

"I know just the farm, half-way between our place and the Count's Hermitage. It belongs to a man and his wife, who are anxious to sell and go out West, to join a

son who is doing well there. It is a fair piece of land, and with proper care could be made to yield produce enough to feed quite a colony. I should n't be surprised, Mrs. Prince, if the Count and his man would be willing to help you. Of course you don't mean to turn farmer yourself?" asked Mr. Ratcliffe, laughingly, regarding the luxurious lady before him.

"Not exactly. I fear that is not my *forte*. But I should like to make it possible for others to carry out such a scheme as yours for rich boys for the benefit of the poor. By and by, in another year Stephen and Marshall could take Hal's place at Camp Chicopee, could they not?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Ratcliffe; "we practically had to give up Herbert last summer, and Steve did his part then. Yes, we could spare Harold."

"And do you think the Count would like to come in?"

"With all his heart. Since Paul came he has thought more and more of the poor among whom the little fellow lived, and especially those noble girls who are working in the Settlement."

"Good! then he is surely our ally. Has he any idea of farming?"

"He and his man Ivan have a thorough knowledge of that, and then, too, I think I know of an excellent woman who could be found to keep house. How many children should you want to have here at a time?"

"Oh, I should start with half a dozen girls and half a dozen boys, and have them trained to work and play. I would leave the selection to Harold and Miss Eliot, for they know the children so well. But would these people, this farmer and his wife, be willing to sell the house and furniture?"

"Oh, you would n't want much of the furniture, but the essentials you could keep. Then you would want to have some painting

done, and one or two partitions knocked down, to give a good dormitory for the boys, and one or two put up, to give small rooms for the girls. Then you will want a good large dining-room and a work-shop."

"Splendid; just the thing! Let us set right about it!"

"We will go early to-morrow to see the Carters, but you may be sure they will be glad to sell, for they could not dream of having a purchaser in midwinter; and you need not offer too high a price;" and naming a figure which he thought sufficient for the Carter farm, he reminded the party that it was growing late; so, leaving the older boys in camp, with many injunctions about fires, Mr. Ratcliffe packed the ladies and Wolcott on to the horse-sled and set off to cross the lake to the farm; while Nan and Jill, with Harry, put on their skates, and were surprised to see Miss Eliot and Harold skating ahead of them, deep in discussion of the

proposed plan, which was fraught with so much good for their joint work.

"It seems too good to be true," said Margaret. "I know a dozen whom I would like to bring up."

"And I two dozen," said Harold; "but are you willing to come too?"

"If I can be of any use."

And then they skated off, while Nan stayed to favor Harry's slower movements.

As it proved that the farmer and his wife were only too glad to sell their property to Mrs. Prince, and her lowest price seemed to them a fortune, Mr. Ratcliffe and the Count went immediately to work to survey the farm, and to consider its possibilities for vegetable and grain growing, and Mrs. Prince and Mrs. Ratcliffe were allowed to explore all the hidden recesses of the farmhouse, and to plan among themselves the disposition of much useless lumber and accumulated rub-

bish of generations, which Mrs. Prince indeed would have found impossible even to consider, had not Mrs. Ratcliffe belonged to the class of practical women who can plan and contrive even without a bank account, and how much with the inspiration of a bountiful purse at command!

"What are we to do, now that I have bought it? I feel as though I had drawn an elephant," said Mrs. Prince, after one of these visits.

"Oh, we must wait until the owners go away, and then it will be easy to rid ourselves of what we don't need and avail ourselves of what we need."

"But I must go home next week," said Mrs. Prince, for once finding that city methods of despatch could not be used here.

"Leave it all to Mr. Ratcliffe and the Count, and they will be delighted to have something to occupy them this winter; then come up in April and give your commands

to your farmer and housekeeper for a spring garden."

"I think that is what I shall have to do."

And Mrs. Prince, with confidence in her country friends, confined herself to the glittering generalities of the great project, very certain that Mr. Ratcliffe and the Count could battle with the details, and looking forward herself to the carrying out of a scheme which should bring the greatest good to the greatest number.

With sport and merriment the days went all too quickly by, a heavy storm but adding to the enjoyment of the house and camp party, bringing out the snowshoes, and spurring the boys to the manufacture of Swedish kees; and on New Year's eve came the moonlight sleigh-ride, and after the sleigh-ride a hot supper and a jolly Virginia Reel and blindman's buff.

The Christmas tree, which had been brightly beautiful for the little boys, still kept its

place of honor in front of the large east window, with its hundred candles, its myriad dazzling beauties of silver and gilt, tinsel and paper, its never-ending surprises in the shape of candy boxes and gifts; for of course the trimmings for a Christmas tree were among the secrets of Mrs. Prince's wonderful packing for this visit, and, as a souvenir of this Christmas party, each of the young people had received a pin in the form of a pair of silver skates, with a gold "C" as a badge of Chicopee set in the centre.

It was at its last lighting on New Year's eve, when there was a faint feeling among the children that there might be still some surprises under its green boughs, that in their midst appeared two figures, — an old man with the bent figure and hoary beard of the Old Year, bearing on his shoulders a tiny boy with golden curls, carrying a quiver of rosy parchment rolls.

"The Old Year and the New!" cried Jill,

clapping her hands and pivoting on one foot in delight at the happy device. A hush fell on the company, as the boy was placed in the centre of the room, and the old man, waving a melancholy good-by, tottered slowly from the room.

"Come back, Old Year," called Harold, "we are not through with you. 'T is only ten o'clock, and perhaps we have something to thank you for."

Thus bidden, the old man returned, and the Infant Year, like a very human child, slipped into Mrs. Prince's lap, the others gathering around the figure of the Old Year with the heartiness of children at a play, and the earnestness of grown people before an oracle.

Fixing them each with the eye of the Ancient Mariner, the Old Year put his questions in turn; first to Harold, —

"Have you anything to thank me for, young man?"

"A degree and an office, and some good slices of fortune. I've more to ask of the boy."

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. A wife and a home? You are never satisfied. And you, Master Marshall. Any thanks from you? What did I do for you?"

"Oh, you gave us the Princeton-Yale game. 'T was good of you."

"Humph! try for better things next time," said the sage. Then of Nan the masker asked, —

"And, Miss Wildbird, any favors we have given you?"

"Oh, yes, too many to count. There 's Paul, and my school, and Jill, and Miss Eliot."

"And you, Miss Gipsy, I suppose I did nothing for you except to cut your hair."

"Oh, yes, you gave me Nan."

Then of Steve: "You, young man, wear not a grateful air; have you any bone to

pick with me? I gave you a beard and a gown."

"Yes, and ruined my eyes, and spoiled my digestion; but you 've taught me patience and some other virtues," said Stephen, making a mock face, as Lewis came to the front, and thought he ought to be grateful for having passed his "preliminaries," and "I 'll look to the new year to work off my conditions."

Margaret was grateful for Chicopee, and Mrs. Prince for happiness, and the Count for Paul, while Mrs. Ratcliffe was grateful for the goodness of her daughters.

Then all laughed over the foolishness of their answers, saying that they were much like the old woman's three wishes which began and ended with "Black Pudding."

And the Old Year revealed himself as Mr. Ratcliffe, saying, —

"Little New Year, I hope you have more wisdom in your quiver of promises than they have shown in their records."

"Are your promises written in the sand or on a rock, little New Year?" asked Margaret, as the little man handed her a rosy parchment scroll. "I am sure they must be written in the stars, for not a word is on mine but 'Love and Hope.'"

"It must be the white paper which each New Year gives us on which to begin again the record for the future. We must fill it for ourselves. This is, you see, tinged with the rosy tint of *Love and Hope*, and promises for you something sweet," said Mrs. Prince.

"And yours, Nan," asked Margaret, blushing.

"*Youth and Faith*, and the blank sheet to be filled by Miss Eighteen," said Nan, looking at Lewis's watchword, *Watch and Work*. "Just what you need, Master Easy-Going."

To Marshall but the single word *Patience*. "I don't think you needed that," said Steve, looking at his own, *Fortitude*.

Jill's was prettiest of all, "To make a little sunshine in the world;" but she chose to think she was never taken seriously.

"These are all the promises you give us, naughty boy, and leave the rest to us. At least you have a fair outside," said Harold, catching the boy upon his shoulder, and saying, "The New Year will make Wolcott a better present than all the rest; he 'll make him eight years old. It will do something for me too; it will give me —"

The rest was whispered in Nan's ear, which sent her flying across the room to kiss Margaret, and say, "The New Year will give me a new cousin."

"And it will give me a new helper," said Mrs. Prince, kissing Margaret too; and then the New Year's party became an occasion for congratulating both Harold and Margaret, and Marshall wore an air of "I told you so," and Nan settled the question Jill had asked so inopportunely by saying, —

"My Chicopee party has been a great success. It has made Margaret one of us, and it has laid the corner-stone of a new Camp Chicopee Colony. Three cheers for Mrs. Prince, the *Old* Year, and the *New* Year!"

CHAPTER XIII.

FIVE YEARS LATER. — HOW NAN PAID HER DEBT TO MRS. PRINCE.

IT was in the bare reception-room of a city hospital one gray spring morning that a handsome blond young man paced up and down restlessly, and impatient of the delay in response to his imperative call for one of the trained nurses.

He was a young fellow just past his majority, with an all-conquering, self-satisfied air which told of a comfortable fortune and a happy disposition. That he was just now troubled, no one could fail to see, for his smooth brow was momentarily wrinkled with anxiety, and his hands played nervously with hat and cane. That his sense of harmony and good taste was offended by

the room in which he was obliged to pass fifteen minutes, was also betrayed by the scorn with which he regarded the monumental effigies of the patrons of the institution which lined the walls, and the geometric dulness of the carpet beneath his feet.

He must have walked at least twenty times up and down the room before a tall, handsome girl, wearing the uniform of the trained nurse, entered, and with a firm yet quiet step came half-way to meet him, with outstretched hands, and the one word, "Lewis."

"Oh, Nan, how good it is to see you! You have grown so tall and handsome in a year. I like the dress, but I hate the idea of your nursing; but Wolcott is desperately ill, mother is frantic, and wants you to come at once, as soon as you can. Typhoid pneumonia they call it. I landed only last night. Have not even seen Jill, for we did not leave Wolcott at all last night."

"Why did n't you send for me at once?"

"Mamma thought she would like to take care of him herself, and has for days, and would not give him up to any one but you. Dr. Harper is attending him, and I see that Marshall is his assistant. Can you come at once, Nan? The carriage is waiting."

"Yes. I will go to the office first; then, if you will let me go in this dress, I will not keep you waiting. Poor little Wolcott!"

What a flood of recollections even the straps and cushions of dear Mrs. Prince's carriage brought to Nan's heart, — of happy hours and pleasure trips, of drives with the little invalid Daisy, of concerts and plays, and visits to poor and sick! But never yet had its errand been one fraught with evil or sorrow to Mrs. Prince herself. For a moment Nan's own heart stood still, as Lewis told of the suffering and danger of the idol of the house.

Into how many homes she had brought the light and strength of her presence in the last year it would take long to tell. How many heartsick and weary mothers had seemed to lay all their burden on her strong young shoulders; and to all, men, women, and children, she had given the best of her head and her heart, to cure, and to comfort where she might not cure. She had won the trust and the confidence of the physicians to a degree almost unparalleled for one so young, so that to name her in the sick-room was to inspire courage. There had been hours when single-handed she had fought with the angel of death in the lone watches of the night, and welcomed the angel of birth in the stillness of the morning; but it had not yet been her fate to hold within her young hands the scales of life and death for one she held so dear as Wolcott Prince. Was it strange that for one moment she involuntarily felt for the beat of her pulse,

as she left the carriage, lest it waver in its steadiness, and imperil the life of the boy who was as dear to her as her own blood ties.

Strong and true it beat, and firm but tender was the hand that met the trembling touch of the mother on the threshold of the sick-room. It took but one experienced glance for Nan to discover that Wolcott was very ill, and with the calm, decisive tone of the trained nurse, she asked for the latest directions left by the doctor, and, rapidly computing the probable changes since his last visit, said almost imperatively to Lewis:

"Take the carriage at once, and tell Dr. Harper I must see him. If he is out, find Marshall. I must have new directions."

Without asking questions, but with set lips and clenched hands, Mrs. Prince paced up and down in the room, while Nan moved about the sick-bed, taking Wolcott's temperature and making rapid notes, then called

for hot cloths, and other immediate necessities with the tone of one who expected instant obedience. And maids and men-servants flew to obey her as though commanded by a sovereign, all feeling that if any one could save the pet of the house, it was Nan.

Then Lewis returned, but with Marshall, Dr. Harper having been called away.

Between these two there was free-masonry. Each understood without speech, and as Nan indicated the conditions rapidly, Marshall as quickly noted what changes should be made in medicine and treatment. The senior doctor had kept him instructed upon the case, so that he knew what and when such changes might be expected.

"I think I will stay to-night. You brought no other nurse, Nan? You may need help. Mrs. Prince will, perhaps, like to have a doctor at hand."

"Is he going — going to get well?" Mrs.

Prince asked, placing her two cold hands on Marshall's arm.

"We hope so, dear Mrs. Prince. You know Nan and I will do our best, and Dr. Harper will come again at seven. I will stay to-night and help Nan."

Nan gave him a grateful look, as he sat down by the opposite side of the bed and kept his fingers on Wolcott's pulse.

The boy was hardly conscious of the ministrations of nurse or doctor, and his mother, obedient to Nan's urgent plea that she should rest, consented to sleep, if she could.

Together through the long hours of the night Nan and Marshall kept their vigil, never resting in their quest for relief and remedy for the sick boy.

Twice and even three times Marshall might have given it up as beyond hope, had not Nan's face, tense with desperate determination to use "human means as though they were divine," and divine as though they

were human, spurred him to try once more what might seem unavailing.

And it was as the sun broke in upon the east, that Nan, holding the little fellow's hand, said, —

"Oh, Marshall, he is better. His pulse is stronger; and, look! he opens his eyes and knows me."

"And now we must work, Nan," said Marshall.

And work they did, till the sun was high in the heavens and the senior doctor came, to pronounce Wolcott out of danger, and then to add, —

"I had no idea he would live through the night; to you two he owes his life."

Not a mouthful of food had passed Nan's lips since she left the hospital at three, the day before, and she had had no rest; but no one could induce her to leave Wolcott that day, though, upon Marshall's promise to stay the following night and call her if

needed, she consented to rest and sleep as the evening came on, and the boy still held his own, gaining a little every hour.

Lewis, who had paced the hall for hours, caught her hand as she came out of the sick-room.

"And, Nan, is this your life, what you would have it? Nan, you are an angel. No wonder you think my life useless."

"Don't, Lewis, talk so. I 'm not an angel. It is seldom like this, and my love for Wolcott has, of course, made it an awful experience."

"Thank Heaven it 's over, and he will get well. Poor mother is prostrated, and Jill is crying her eyes out down stairs. Could n't you let her come up to your room a minute?"

"Not just now, Lewis. I must be alone awhile, I am so tired," said Nan, with white lips, entering the room which had always been set apart for her, and throwing herself

on her knees beside the little white bed where she had slept so many happy nights in careless girlhood.

If the prayer was an inarticulate one, it was from a heart full of gratitude to Him who had given her the victory; but there was mingled with it a cry for strength and help in hours of such peril and danger, for it was not the first time Nan had realized the serious nature of her chosen calling, and the terrible responsibilities which might be hers.

Long after she slept, down stairs Lewis and Jill sat side by side and talked in broken whispers, for Lewis and Jill had been engaged a year. There had been rumors that Lewis had taken it for granted that Nan would marry him, not knowing how he could steer his light craft without her; but when one summer day he had found that Nan did not agree to that, but that she thought he would do much better to try his suit with Jill, he had followed, as usual,

Nan's advice, and found that young lady both charming and willing; so just before Lewis sailed away for a year among the artists in Paris, Jill had promised to marry him by and by, and now that he had come back the by and by was not too far off.

As Jill still adored Nan most fondly, she had not a spark of jealousy in her heart for Lewis's admiration for her, but quite agreed with Lewis that he was not half good enough for her; that she herself, with her pert and saucy ways, her fitful temper and ready wit, was a much more suitable choice for him.

"I can't imagine Nan in a Paris café! Dear girl! I hope she won't waste all her health and beauty on sick people," said Jill.

"I don't see why she can't make up her mind to marry Marshall. We all know he worships the ground she walks on," said Lewis; then adding, "I think she is beginning to care for him. She seemed so glad to see him last night."

"I am sure they would be perfectly happy among the invalids at the Colony, if they were married. I think she has had career enough," said Jill.

"I am glad she did n't close it before she saved Wolcott's life. Poor mamma, who has suffered so much!" said Lewis, going forward to put his arm about his mother, who entered the library, pale and weary, with the question on her lips, "Where is Nan?" as she sank into a chair.

"Gone to sleep," Lewis answered, his arm still thrown protectingly about her. "She has not closed her eyes for forty-eight hours, and now that Wolcott is so much better Marshall says she must rest; and Marshall is the only one Nan will obey at times," he added.

"I hope she may sleep, dear child! Marshall is so good to take her place, for Nan does n't want another nurse just now. Dear girl! what a life of heroism and self-sacrifice!

Jill, dear, will you give me that photograph of Wolcott? Is n't it pretty?" and, holding the treasured likeness of her boy in health fondly in her hands, she closed her eyes to see the wan little face on the pillow up stairs, with a thankful heart that the dear eyes were not closed forever.

What happy days those June days were, when Wolcott was convalescent, and Nan still lingered, happy to stay beside the dear boy who had so nearly slipped from their grasp! Lewis and Jill busy and enthusiastic in their plans for the future, artists' dreams of sketching-tours in France and a winter in Rome, spending hours together in the sick-room or studio, where Lewis was finishing a splendid study of Giovanni, now a prosperous proprietor of a fruit-store, but always a devoted retainer of the family, keeping Wolcott's table filled with finest grapes and sweetest oranges, and posing proudly for the picture which daily increased

his vanity. Marshall, coming daily as the physician, and yet lingering for some moments to chat with them all, and once in a while stealing Nan from Wolcott for a walk or a drive, at last had led her beyond the Eastern Boulevard to the pleasant paths of the Park, where birds and trees spoke to them both of their happy hunting-grounds. It was there Marshall in his frank, manly way pleaded for himself for the last time, —

"I have been so patient, Nan! You wanted to try your wings, to fight the fight single-handed. Do you think it is easy for me to see you passing through such scenes as these we have known, alone or at all? You can be as useful, as helpful to mankind, as a doctor's wife. I need you as much as the world does. Come, dear, there are many nurses, but only one Nan for me. Say you will, Nan."

"If I may take care of Wolcott if he is ever so ill again. It is all the way I can

repay Mrs. Prince for all she has done for me."

"I promise you that, and as much more home ministration as you like, dear, with the lodge at Chicopee full of invalids in summer-time; but together, you and I."

What Nan's answer was to that, it were not fair to say; but three months later a letter from Chicopee to Mrs. Prince told a story in itself.

DEAREST LADY, — So you are all going abroad, dear Mrs. Prince. We hardly thought you would let Lewis and Jill go off for two years without you, and the change will do Wolcott so much good. Of course we are all glad and sad that Nan and Marshall are really to go to Vienna for this year; but it will be so helpful to them both, and we can still think of you as all together, and be as good stewards as we can of the interests over here.

The Colony has never been so successful as this year, and Daisy is such a comfort to me, with all the little girls, teaching them to sew and to sing, — a perfect good fairy. Harold had fifteen

boys this summer, and some of them have been able to earn a good deal for themselves, and some are ready to go away as good workmen.

Rob and Paul are to go away to school this fall, and dear Mrs. Ratcliffe and the good "Don" will spend the winter with Marian and Herbert. Their children are so pretty, and it was so lovely to see them scattering roses at Nan's pretty wedding, which was exactly like Marian's, they tell me, except that the dear old Bishop who is dead married Marian, and Steve, our good Saint Stephen, performed the ceremony in the lovely chapel under the oaks. Steve is such a fine fellow, and works so hard at his mission work in town. I often wonder if he will ever be selfish enough to look for a wife. He thinks he can do better work alone, and there is so much work to be done. When I go to Brooklyn this winter, I shall much miss seeing you all, but shall love to think of your happiness on the other side. Lewis and Jill with their paints and brushes, Nan and Marshall in the great hospitals, and Nan enjoying the music and taking up her violin again, as Marshall says she shall, and you, dear friend, to be, as ever, the fairy godmother and guardian angel to them all.

Marshall says that his father has always meant that he should have this year abroad, because he gave up his last two years at college in those hard times, and nothing could have been more fortunate than that you could all go together.

Our baby — the little "Princess," as Harold always calls her, because she was named for you — sends kisses, Daisy much love, and Harold the best of wishes.

Yours ever,

MARGARET ELIOT RATCLIFFE.

THE END.

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